

Recommendations for Latino Student Success

Who We Are: Connecting Practice to Policy

The National Institute for Latino School Leaders (NILSL) is a program designed to bridge the divide between practice and policy by providing school leaders the tools they need to advocate for policies and reform efforts that render increased educational outcomes for Latino and English learner (EL) students. It is the only institute that trains school administrators to advocate for national- and state-level policies that strengthen the education of Latino students and ELs while educating decision-makers.

We are a group of school administrators and nonprofit leaders from across the country who collectively serve students in K-12 grade through our respective school and program models. We work with Latino students and families to support student achievement. We believe, the way to reverse the nation's low educational attainment is with addressing the needs of Latino students and families. We have witnessed, firsthand, how family and school partnerships positively impact learning, and have designed programs and initiatives in order to increase opportunities for families to engage in their child's education. Given the changing demographics of our schools and the growth of the Latino population, we believe that the success of Latino students who may also be ELs is intrinsically tied to the overall success of all students.

Background

The cultural make up of the American classroom is 25% Latino. Nationally there are more than 4.9 million EL students enrolled in K-12 public schools, constituting about 10% of the nation's total public school population. EL student enrollment has increased 28% between the 2000 and 2016 school years. In fact, forty-three states saw the number of ELs increase, with growth as high as 765.1% increase in South Carolina. It is projected that Latinos will make up 30% of students in our K-12 educational system by 2027. Despite the number of Latino and EL students, the U.S. educational system is not effectively serving their needs. According to the National Assessment Educational Progress (NAEP), only 55% of Latino 4th grade students read at or above basic. Given that Latinos will make up a third of the U.S. workforce by 2030, raising the educational attainment of Latino students is perhaps the best way to ensure that Hispanic students are prepared to fill the jobs of the future.

Our Ask

UnidosUS NILSL fellows recommend that Congress update policies within ESSA and increase funding for the programs that will help improve educational outcomes and supports for Latino and other students across the country that:

- Strengthen Family Engagement and Language Accessibility
- Improve Identification and Strengthen Supports for English Learners
- Leverage Partnerships with Community-Based Organization for Latino Student Success
- Improve Teacher Professional Development, Training and Retention of Teachers with a Focus on English Learners and Cultural Competency
- Increase Transparency on Teacher Recruitment and Retention Demographic Data
- Increase Support for Hispanic Serving Institutions

The Impact

From our own experiences in classrooms across the country, we know the COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated the gaps already existing for ELs and Latino students. Our students include families living in poverty, with unstable housing and parents with low-wage jobs. Ensuring that our schools are welcoming hubs for our most vulnerable families is a small part of a much larger vision of defining, unpacking, and pushing forth this idea of an authentic community school. We firmly believe that supporting families and students in this way will increase K-12 achievement, college readiness, enrollment, persistence, and completion.

All students deserve access to an excellent education, and all parents deserve the ability to help support their students to be successful. We know that these changes will help us to achieve that goal and will allow our Latino students to reach their full potential.

Endnotes

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Policy Memorandum: Increase Supports for Parental Engagement to Increase Student Achievement

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Who We Are

We are educators from diverse K-16 settings across the country. In our 37 combined years of serving Latino students and families, our collective work has focused on schools, nonprofits, and postsecondary institutions in Arkansas, Tennessee, and Michigan. Through our work, we serve Latino families, most of them low-income, limited English proficient (LEP), and first-generation college students. Our varied roles provide us with unique insights into family engagement for Latino students.

Background

Currently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that districts spend at least 1% of Title I funds on family and parental engagement activities, which we do not believe is enough to meaningfully engage families under “normal” school conditions. Given COVID-19 and the expected years of recovery, this percentage is not enough to adequately support parents, as districts have had to make drastic changes to schooling. Only 1% of funds will not make up for learning loss and the trauma students have experienced during this time. We need a more robust long-term investment in family engagement to ensure that our education system is prepared and resourced to support and engage families for many years to come.

Our Ask

We believe that in order to increase student outcomes for the Latino population, more must be done to engage Latino families. To increase Latino families’ abilities to promote

stronger opportunities and outcomes for students, we recommend the following changes to Title I of ESSA:

- Increase the Title I parent engagement set-aside from 1% to 3%.
- At least half of the allotted 3% of Title I funding cannot be relocated for school-wide initiatives and must be used for the purpose of targeted family engagement efforts that are tailored for eligible Title I families.
- Funds used for staff training must prioritize research-based practices that have shown increased family engagement within diverse communities, with particular attention given to research that addresses the digital divide.
- The current ESSA recommendations on language accessibility must change to a mandatory requirement for translated print, digital, and other communication materials in the top three languages spoken in the school district other than English.

The Need

Latino students have faced long-term inequalities in the education system, from attending schools with lower levels of funding, lower rates of certified teachers, a lack of culturally competent teachers and teachers of color, and less access to advanced course work. Additionally, the current pandemic has forced schools to engage with youth and families virtually, exacerbating long-standing barriers and highlighting the disproportionate impact of the digital divide.¹ Given the barriers families are facing related to digital literacy and beyond, family engagement will be a crucial tool to help close these opportunity gaps—and it will be a proven method for increasing outcomes for students.

- **Latino parents place a high value on education**, but language barriers, understanding of the school system, and ineffective cultural practices on the part of the school often limit the extent to which parents feel capable of being more active participants in their child's academic life.²
- **Latino parents want more communication and support from their schools** when it comes to supporting student outcomes, they are often not sure how to access what they need.³
- **Latino parents' perception of "involvement" is often different from schools' normative understandings**, which is more defined by academic involvement rather than life participation. Based on Latino parents' levels of participation, teachers often assume that Latino parents don't care about their children's education, without understanding their context or knowledge of the school system.⁴

Impact

To ensure that Latinx students do not fall further behind academically under the current crisis and that they have a strong opportunity to excel after the crisis, it is essential that Latinx families have the tools and skills to support their children both in social-emotional development and in response to the increased burdens that parents will face as their children engage with remote learning. There will not be a single solution to supporting family engagement while addressing issues of digital equity, but providing more funding for this critical work will ensure that students, teachers, and parents can experience some of the benefits of effective family and school partnerships.

- **Family engagement can have long-term positive effects on student academics.** Reports have found that when family engagement is intentional and sustained, it has a positive impact on grades, test scores, passing rates, enrollment in higher-level programs, high school graduation, and college attendance.⁵
- **Sustained, learning-based, collaborative programming is most effective in creating a lasting impact on children.** Additional funding would serve to amplify these effects within the Latino community.
- **The sooner we take action, the sooner Latino families and students can benefit.** It takes time to develop the types of meaningful, sustained relationships between families and staff that can foster students' social, emotional, and academic growth.

Endnotes

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NILSL

Policy Memorandum: Engaging Immigrant Families for Student Success

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Who We Are

We are an Edtech Startup Co-Founder/CEO and nonprofit leader from Texas and California. After 11 years in education as a teacher, administrator, and principal, Oscar Romano transitioned to found Ember Within, PBC, an Edtech startup company in the assessment and data analytics space of virtual learning. Most recently, Oscar was the principal of YES Prep Gulfton (part of YES Prep Public Schools in Houston, TX), a charter school of 1,050 students from 6th-12th grade where 96% are Latino or Black, 98% qualify for free or reduced lunch, and more than 40% are English learners (ELs).

Jordan Harrison is Vice President of Community Impact and Partnerships at Reality Changers, which serves more than 1,200 students in southern California and Mexico. In our student body, 86% identify as Latinx, 98% are first-generation college students and 60% of our students come from mixed-status families.

We are both fellows with UnidosUS through the National Institute of Latino School Leaders, which seeks to bridge the divide between policy and practice and to train effective advocates for policy reform in ways that lead to increased educational outcomes for Latino students and families.

Background

As of 2018, the Migration Policy Institute reported that there were an estimated 18 million children in the United States living in a household with at least one parent who was an immigrant, either documented or undocumented, and 2.1 million of those children were immigrants themselves. These 18 million children represented 26% of the total 69.5 million children in the United States, now making up a significant share of the U.S. population under the age of 18. Of the 26.9 million children under the age of 18 who are also living in low-income families, 32% (8.5 million) of them were children of immigrants. In all, those 8.5 million children of immigrants living in low-income families make up 47% of all children of immigrants.¹

When breaking down the data by ethnicity, a 2017 study reported that 54% of all children of immigrants were Latinx.² This data begets three points:

1. Children of immigrants and their families are not a monolithic entity that can be addressed with a single set of broad educational policies.
2. A significant portion of all children of immigrants (8.5 million) live in low-income families and may require additional targeted services.
3. With Latinx children making up a majority of all children of immigrants, it is important to appropriately represent them in major educational policy decisions.

The United States' public school system was built to help ensure that all students receive a quality education, regardless of income level. The pandemic has upended schools' abilities to help compensate for the inequities that Latinx children of immigrants face in K-12 education. Latinx families are now on the frontlines of their children's daily educational progress, and leveraging their support could have meaningful impacts on their children's lives.

The Ask

Parent engagement is critical for the desired outcomes and improvements of our Latinx and immigrant students. To increase and improve support for effective engagement, we recommend:

- Increase the Title I family engagement set-aside from 1% to 3% to support innovative and evidence-based family engagement programming. With this increase, districts must go beyond posting in information in multiple languages. Funding must be used to implement innovative, evidence-based practices that reach families of all languages and to ensure that the engagement leads to families understanding where to find information, how to understand it, and how to use it effectively to improve outcomes for their students.
- Create set-aside in Title III that requires grantees to use 2% of their grants for innovative, evidence-based family engagement practices that reach families of all languages and ensure that the engagement leads to families understanding where to find information, how to understand it, and how to use it effectively to improve outcomes for their students.
- Incentivize schools to partner with community-based organizations to support family and student engagement.

The Need

Family involvement is a key lever in improving educational outcomes for children of immigrants.

The reality is that state and federal government agencies do not have the capacity to provide children of immigrants with the support they need to succeed in K-12 education. Families are the conduit through which support can be provided, but many immigrant families are not properly equipped to support their children through the American education system. Numerous studies have found positive correlations between family involvement and stronger academic achievement performance. "This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students at all ages."³

Immigrant parents need more support because of their unfamiliarity with the system.

Unfortunately, immigrant parents are at a disadvantage when supporting their children, simply because they weren't raised in the American educational system. In one example, a

parent attending a session led by the Parent Institute for Quality Education spoke up and said, “We don’t know what we don’t know, and that’s a dangerous place to be. Teachers assume I’m not asking because I’m not interested, but I don’t even know what questions to ask.”⁴ An equitable education for children of immigrants must involve clearer and more explicit entry points by which these students’ parents can adequately support their children.

School closures due to COVID-19 have amplified some of the inequities that work against children of immigrants.

As soon as the coronavirus hit our communities, schools around the country were closed, and parents of all backgrounds instantly became the primary facilitators of content-learning for their children. The impact has been more starkly felt among low-income households where parents have no choice but to expose themselves to danger as essential workers. Across the United States, 69% of all immigrants and 74% of undocumented workers can be classified as essential workers—individuals employed in critical infrastructure roles.⁵ Considering that 50% of all immigrants are Latinx, the impact of the pandemic to Latinx immigrant households becomes more pronounced.⁶ Families have faced greater risks of exposure to the coronavirus, placing entire communities in danger of illness. Children have struggled to keep up with the transition to virtual learning, where insufficient income (for devices and/or WiFi) serves as a daunting barrier to equitable access to education.

Impact

In our careers, we have seen the positive impact that educating and partnering with immigrant families can have on the outcomes of our students. We have seen the joy one family can have when they feel like they have an impact within their students’ educational journey. For example, Ms. Perez, who did not speak any English, started attending school board and PTA meetings when translation services were provided and when brochures in Spanish and an entire online website for Spanish-speaking families were created. She insisted on supporting her three children in applying to college, and they now attend the University of Hawaii, University of California, Berkeley, and San Diego State University.

Additional research suggests that:

Family engagement will increase overall student well-being and academic success.

Zhang (2016) states, “parental involvement in children’s school-related activities is directly related to their academic achievement, cognitive development, and English ability.”⁷

Studies have shown that when the student feels parental support they perform better in school, their academics go up, they participate in the classroom and in school activities.⁸

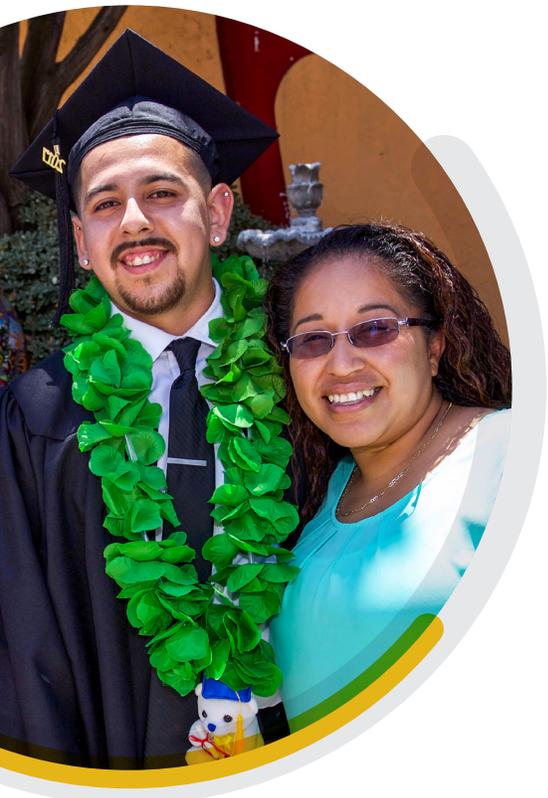
Family social capital will increase to support their children. According to a 2009 report from the Pew Hispanic Center, 89% of Latino parents believe college is important for success in life, yet only 40% feel they have the knowledge to help their children prepare for college.⁹ Our families have the right for their children to succeed, and supporting our immigrant families will deepen the funds of knowledge for their success.

Family engagement will broaden from a cultural survivor role to a cultural leader capacity.

Supporting our immigrant population is a way to support our expanding community. When families engage in their student’s lives there is an increase of family engagement in other areas within school and the community.¹⁰

Endnotes

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Policy Memorandum: Increasing Teacher Diversity to Increase Student Achievement

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Who We Are

We are Latino educators who work at Title 1 schools within similar communities in the cities of Los Angeles and Oakland, California, supporting students who are predominantly first- and second-generation immigrants from Mexico and Central America. The students we serve are mainly English learners (ELs) from diverse cultural backgrounds which include Latino, Vietnamese, Chinese, Hmong, and Ethiopian, to name a few. We come from similar backgrounds and experiences as the students we serve, which fuels our desire to improve access to more culturally responsive teaching staff. We are fellows with the National Institute of Latino School Leadership (NILSL) at UnidosUS, which seeks to bridge the divide between policy and practice and train effective advocates for policies and reform efforts to strengthen educational outcomes for Latinos students.

Background

As highlighted in the Pew Research Center analysis of Census Bureau data, the population of the youngest Latinos, those under 18 years old, grew by 22% from 2006 to 2016, bringing the under-18 Hispanic population to (18.3 million). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the percentage of public school students in the United States who were ELs was higher in fall 2017 (10.1%, or 5.0 million students) than in fall 2000 (8.1%, or 3.8 million students). Given the demand, we must ensure that policies meet the needs of Latinos and ELs to ensure all students succeed.

The purpose of Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA) is to provide federal assistance for traditional teacher programs and alternative routes to state teacher certification programs; hold such programs accountable, and support states to improve their teacher preparation programs and expand the teacher workforce.

Our Ask

- Pass the STRONG Act of 2020 H.R. 8468: To amend the HEA of 1965 to allow certain students enrolled in an institution of higher education to apply for teaching residency programs, and for other purposes.
- Increase funding for the Higher Education Act of 1965 Title II to \$600 million to increase funding for teacher preparation programs.

The Need

Public schools in the United States are more diverse than ever, and these schools need diverse teachers who are able to be culturally responsive to students and their families. Teachers who can do more than empathize, and who can also relate to students and their families, speak the same language, and understand the experience of growing up in an immigrant household will be crucial in keeping students and families engaged in student's education. Inequalities in educational opportunity, including technology access, long pre-existed the COVID-19 pandemic, and has disproportionately impacted Black, Latino, Native American, and low-income families.¹ In addition, the Black and Latino communities have been and continue to be disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, of the 1,375 coronavirus cases in San Francisco where a race had been determined, 45% were Latino, compared to 15% of the overall population, according to public health and census data. In Alameda County, 43% of cases with a known race were Latino, compared with 22% of the population. And in Santa Clara County, Latino people made up 45% of cases with a listed race, but 25% of the population.²

Given the current number of COVID-19 infections in the country, most schools have opted to provide a distance learning option, or to switch completely to a distance learning platform. COVID-19 is a virus that has had widespread, devastating impacts across different sectors. According to The Learning Policy Institute there could be a minimum projected loss of 320,000 teaching positions nationwide (or 8% of the national teacher workforce), which is nearly triple the downsizing that the teacher workforce experienced during the Great Recession.³ This attrition of teachers will impact students, especially Black and Latino students, who are likely to be enrolled in districts that are twice as likely to have a funding gap of more than \$5,000 per pupil.⁴ Not only do these students attend schools with funding gaps, but they are likely to attend schools where most teachers are not from similar backgrounds.⁵ According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 7.8% of teachers are Latino, while 25.8% of students are Latino.⁶ Thus, the need to expand teacher preparation programs to recruit and effectively train more teachers of color is greater than ever, in order to prepare for a future through and after COVID-19.

Growth of Latino students, where are the Latino teachers?

As the Hispanic/Latino student population rises, the number of Hispanic teachers has not grown at a rate comparable to the student population. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 82% of teachers are White.⁷ A Latino teacher diversity gap exists in 40 of the 41 states with available data. The four states with the largest gaps—California, Nevada, Arizona, and Texas—contain more than half of the country's Latinx population.⁸ As the school system slowly adjusts and ultimately returns from the COVID-19 pandemic, the dynamics of the Latino and Black population will demand that school systems work to infuse cultural competence into both classroom instruction and schoolwide systems to adapt and recover from the residual academic dips due to COVID-19.

Obstacles to increasing the Latino teacher pipeline

Although much of the research demonstrates the benefits of teacher diversity, many Latino students rarely encounter teachers who share their ethnic background.⁹ There still remain multiple obstacles in creating a vibrant pipeline for teachers of color. For example, the time it takes to complete a teacher certification program, coupled with the high costs of graduate school, makes it much more difficult for Latino college graduates, many of whom come from low-income households, to commit to a profession with so many costs and so little compensation.

Impact

STRONG ACT

The STRONG Act of 2020 H.R. 8468 would amend the HEA of 1965 with an increase in funding to \$600 million, allowing certain students enrolled in an institution of higher education to apply for teaching residency program supports and other high-quality routes to state certification or licensure. This funding would create more accessible pathways for our future Black, Latino, Native American, and low-income teachers.

High Quality Routes Lower Gaps by Being More Affordable

Other high-quality routes to teacher state certification are often more affordable and accessible for future Black and Latino teachers. According to a report, Latino borrowers are more likely to drop out because they or their families are more likely to face financial pressures than White borrowers, and overall, 31% of Latino students with student debt dropped out of college in 2009 (the most recent data available).

Other quality routes, such as teacher residency programs, demonstrate higher teacher retention rates, which in turn lowers the gaps between Latino students and Latino teachers. Without added public investment into innovative alternative methods for certifications, the teacher diversity gap will only widen as the numbers of Latino K-12 students continue to rise as their needs do as well.

Teachers of Color Boost the Academic Performance Of Students Of Color

Teachers from similar backgrounds are a rich resource in hard-to-staff schools. Studies have found that teachers of color boost the academic performance of students of color. Teachers' influences include improved reading and mathematics test scores, improved graduation rates, and increased aspirations to attend college.¹⁰ Teachers of color can connect and motivate students early, serve as community ambassadors to families, and contribute to school-wide cultural improvements. In the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the future stages of recovery, the need to bridge cultural gaps to deal not only with distance learning, but also with the dissemination and collection of information and health updates to families of color, demands a focus on the need to increase the number of teachers of color. To prepare for the growing diverse American student population, America's schools need a teaching corps that is not only effective through quality training, but that is also racially and ethnically diverse.

Endnotes

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Policy Memorandum: Closing the Achievement Gap by Recruiting and Retaining Diverse Educators

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Devon Teran, Principal, DeLaSalle Charter School

Who We Are

We are education leaders with more than 30 years of combined experience, which has helped us understand the importance of recruiting, retaining, and sustaining high-quality, culturally diverse educators to teach students of color. Celia Garcia Alvarado leads the education efforts for the Cesar Chavez Foundation throughout the Southwest as the Executive Vice President of Education and Devon Teran is the Principal of DeLaSalle Charter High School in Kansas City, MO. Both of us serve under-resourced communities with high numbers of Latino students. We are also part of the National Institute of Latino School Leadership (NILSL) Fellowship with UnidosUS, which seeks to bridge the divide between policy and practice and train effective advocates for policies and reform efforts to strengthen educational outcomes for Latinos students.

Background

The most recent Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization, the Every Student Success Act (ESSA), includes Title II, which supports mentoring and teacher and administrator training. Currently, money flows to states and districts to support these activities, but there is significant flexibility and minimal transparency on how these funds are used. As a result, there is no targeted support for or evidence that any funding is being used to develop and retain culturally diverse educators.

Our Ask

- Require school districts and states to collect and report teacher racial and ethnic demographic data on ESSA state report cards.
- Require school districts to collect and report teacher retention rates by racial and ethnic demographic data on ESSA state report cards.

- Require schools and states to include plans to reserve 20% of their ESEA Title II funds in grant applications to support the recruitment and retention of culturally diverse educators.

Adding teacher demographic and retention data by race and ethnicity to ESSA state report cards will give states, schools, and communities the information they need to better tailor their strategies and partner with community organizations to strengthen and sustain the diversity of their teacher workforce. Moreover, this data is important in order for all districts to become proactive in meeting growing diverse student populations' unique needs, like Latino students, across the United States.

The Need

All students benefit from a diverse teacher workforce that wants and is able to stay in the classrooms.¹ Latino students growing up in under-resourced communities are disproportionately affected by teacher shortages and by not having access to teachers who share their racial/ethnic background. This is particularly concerning given the historically lower educational attainment patterns of Latinos in comparison to their White peers.

Reporting annual teacher demographic and retention data by race and ethnicity is not required of districts or states under current ESSA guidelines.

Current ESSA guidelines for state report cards require reporting data about educator qualifications that includes the number and percentages of inexperienced teachers, teachers teaching with emergency or provisional credentials, and teachers who are not teaching in the subject or field for which the teacher is certified or licensed.

While race/ethnicity and retention data are sometimes compiled by third-party researchers at the state and district levels, it is often incomplete and thereby insufficient. Reliable and timely data are needed to better inform diverse teacher recruitment, hiring, and retention practices, as well as efforts by school districts across all states.

COVID-19 is widening achievement gaps for Latino students due to distance learning inequities, and Latino students need teachers who can meet their academic, cultural, and linguistic needs.

Latinos are the fastest growing student population in the United States, but their race/ethnicity is not mirrored in the diversity of our current teacher workforce. While Latino students account for more than 25% of K-12 students nationally, approximately only 9% of educators identify as Hispanic or Latino.² Moreover, this number is not evenly distributed across the country; according to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 40 states, Latinos are less than 3% of the teacher workforce.³

These numbers are alarming given that census data shows a shift in settlement patterns for Latinos, which presents new challenges for districts that are not prepared to meet their unique needs, especially in rural areas.⁴ English learner (EL) populations have more than doubled between 2005-2015 in states such as Mississippi, South Carolina, Kentucky, Kansas, and Maryland.⁵

Latino students are disproportionately affected by teacher shortages and teachers of color attrition rates, which are challenging school districts across the United States, particularly those located in rural areas.

Teachers of color are leaving the teaching profession at higher rates than they are being hired into it, and this dynamic directly contributes to teacher shortages and a lack of diversity in the teaching workforce. This is particularly concerning given that this group

is motivated to return to their own communities to teach and often finds placements in hard-to-staff schools.⁶ Some estimates predict that there could be as many as 250,000 vacant teaching positions by 2025, and it is unclear how many of these will be vacated by Latino teachers. To illustrate the severity of this problem, the Learning Policy (LPI) Institute found that in California, which educates the largest percentage of Latino students in the country, there are rural school districts where all the teachers that were hired were emergency credential teachers.⁷ This is highly alarming, given that this group of teachers is more likely to leave the profession.

Impact

Latino teachers positively impact Latino student achievement and social growth and can play a pivotal role in addressing learning loss and socio-emotional effects due to COVID-19.

Research suggests and supports that Latino teachers are better positioned than their non-Latino counterparts to meet the needs of Latino students. Benefits include stronger academic achievement and socio-emotional benefits as well as fewer unexcused absences and lower likelihoods of chronic absenteeism and suspensions.⁸ These teachers can also serve as relatable successful role models because they share or may have a greater understanding of their students' culture.

Latino teachers can be leveraged to curb the learning loss and socio-emotional effects that Latino students are experiencing due to COVID-19. Culturally diverse teachers are able to communicate more effectively with families and share their needs so that schools can design better solutions. Schools that have staffs that resemble the demographic makeups of their communities are able to make better decisions that meet the unique needs of their students and families during the pandemic.

Improving the retention of culturally diverse educators addresses teacher shortages.

While Latinos, as a group, are entering the teaching profession at an increasing rate, they are also exiting at higher rates than other groups.⁹ Increased accountability and incentivized use of Title II funds to address both recruitment and retention of culturally diverse educators can keep more teachers in the classroom and reduce teacher shortages. Teachers of color are a resource for students in hard-to-staff schools because many report feeling called to teach in low-income communities of color. Latino teachers play an important role in filling vacancies in these schools, and whether they decide to remain in teaching has significant impacts on students.¹⁰

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Policy Memorandum: Strengthen Parental Involvement Supports to Ensure Latino Families Can Engage with Schools

Isaac Cardona, Area Senior Director, Portland Public Schools

*Paul Yumbla, Senior Team Lead, Abraham Lincoln High School,
Denver Public Schools*

Who We Are

We are educators working in Title I schools that center around community involvement.

My name is Isaac Cardona, and I am an Area Senior Director in Portland, Oregon, managing elementary and K-8 schools across Oregon's largest school district. We serve nearly 50,000 students, half of whom come from low-income or underserved backgrounds. In my role at the district office, I work to create avenues for parents to feel welcomed and to participate in their school communities, regardless of race, ethnicity, or languages spoken.

My name is Paul Yumbla and I am a teacher-leader at a Title I school in Denver, Colorado, that serves 91% students of color with four languages spoken and 56% English learner (EL) students. As an educator, I try to bridge the gap between a sense of community and academic ownership. This means ensuring that all of our families are not only seen and heard but feel valued at our school.

Background

In the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), every district that receives more than \$500,000 has a Title I parent engagement set-aside of 1%, to be used for parental engagement in schools with input from parents on how to spend those funds. According to an article published by Public School Review in 2018, "extensive research has shown that students achieve more in school when their parents are involved in their education."¹ For families that do not speak English, communication can often be a barrier in partaking in school activities and navigating the complex school system. Families may

lack access to interpretation services and translation of documents as this can be cost prohibitive for schools. By increasing a direct set aside for interpretation services, the funding will allow all families to be able to access their child's education.

Our Ask

- Increase Title I set-aside for parental engagement from 1% to 3%.
- Ensure that school districts with more than 15% ELs reserve 0.5% of the 3% set-aside for translation and interpretation services.

The Need

Latinos are a growing student population. The percentage of ELs in the United States public school system continues to grow each year, with the most common language being Spanish-speaking populations, roughly representing 74.8% of all ELs in the United States.² Although Latinos and ELs represent a growing population of school students, families may not have the ability or comfort to engage with school communities about their child's education.

Parent engagement increases graduation rates. In Colorado, Latinos graduate from high school at a rate of 70%.³ Research has shown that parent engagement and a supportive community would increase graduation rates.

Remote learning—and the long-term impact of the pandemic on learning—increases the need for parent engagement. With remote learning establishing itself as a more constant presence than many of us anticipated, there have been even more obstacles for Latino families to overcome. With school “going virtual,” families where English is not primarily spoken at home are struggling to engage and navigate distance learning. In a national survey by Latino Decisions, the results were evident: The number one concern from Latino parents was “communication with teachers.” Sixty-five percent of parents feel “learning is more difficult now because it is harder to communicate with teachers,” and that difficulty is compounded by those that solely spoke a language other than English.⁴

In Colorado, nearly 30% of the K-12 population is Latino. For every 100 Latino ninth graders in Colorado, only 67 will graduate from high school; only 28 will enroll in college, and only 10 will graduate.⁵ Colorado is last among the 50 states when comparing Latinos (ages 25-64) to Whites who hold an associate's or bachelor's degree. Having more degree-earning Latinos happens when schools have funding dedicated to their holistic needs. Ensuring families have access to interpretation, translation, and robust language supports allows for students to have multiple entry points for college support. This will go a long way in combating Colorado's 35% degree-attainment gap.

Oregon has seen a 72% increase in Latinos in the past 20 years, but now with COVID-19 closures, the achievement gaps that persist for students of color nationally is now compounded by online learning and a lack of engagement by BIPOC students.⁶ In Oregon's largest school district, already 25% of Latino students are struggling to consistently log on to distance learning classes. This trend has been seen in large cities across the United States, including Los Angeles, where last year 50,000 Black and Latino students failed to engage in online classes.⁷

Parents are ready to engage and to support their students, but communication is key. Having the ability to engage with teachers, administrators, and school personnel is an added and necessary step to engaging students in content and closing the achievement gap.

Impact

Knowing very well that the social, political, economic, and cultural factors that impact the educational experience of Latinos in the United States are complex, we would like to hone in on the impact that interpretation services can provide to families, students, and community stakeholders. Ensuring that our schools are welcoming hubs for our most vulnerable families is a small part of a much larger vision of defining, unpacking, and pushing forth this idea of an authentic community school. We firmly believe that supporting families and students in this way will increase K-12 achievement, college readiness, enrollment, persistence, and completion.

All students deserve access to an excellent education, and all parents deserve the ability to help support their students to be successful. We know that these changes will help us to achieve that goal and will allow our Latino students to reach their full potential.

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Policy Memorandum:
**Recognizing and Addressing
the Diverse Needs of
English Learners in Order
to Propel Them Toward
Academic Success**

Sandra Peloquin, EL Teacher, Lorain Schools

*Alma D. Velazquez, Principal, Jason Lee Elementary
Portland Public Schools*

Who We Are

We are experienced educators, a teacher and a principal, working in public schools whose mission and focus is in the academic success of our growing populations of English learners (ELs) and Latino students in the states of Oregon and Ohio.

Sandra Peloquin provides EL services at Lorain High as an English language teacher and advocate with 28 years of experience. Her high school students are part of an urban district where 40% of the student population is Latino. In Ohio, 73.6% of EL students were born in the United States and 37.7% of all ELs speak Spanish as the dominant home language.¹

Alma D. Velázquez, she serves as principal at Jason Lee Elementary in Portland, Oregon. In her 12 years in education has served as a bilingual elementary school teacher, a teacher-developer in the area of language acquisition and language instruction, and a school administrator. Twenty percent of all Oregon students are ELs, and 40% of all students qualify for free and reduced lunch.² In her school right now, a quarter of all students are English learners and more than 60% qualify for free and reduced lunch.

We are Latino educators of effective public schools with significant numbers of Latino and EL students. We represent the high-poverty communities in Oregon and Ohio.

Background

Under the ESSA, states are able to identify all ELs as part of a single category. This means that states do not have to account for student progress in individual subgroups, making it

more likely that individual student subgroups will not receive adequate support to succeed academically, graduate high school, or have promising futures in college or career. This one category includes enormous and varying needs of services, from students newly arrived to this country to students born in the United States who grow up in bilingual homes. In order to support all of them successfully, we must start by breaking down the category of EL into different subgroups, known as EL *typologies*.

We know that the single most important factor in student outcomes is educator effectiveness. Teachers and school administrators need adequate professional development if they are to move students into English proficiency and towards academic success.

Our Ask

A federal reauthorization of ESSA should set meaningful goals while providing resources and supports that improve the academic outcomes for ELs. We believe that federal policy should reflect upon current national research on second-language learning and bilingualism to simultaneously develop ELs' language and literacy skills to allow them to engage in the full range of academic content learning. Federal law should build upon what states are already doing. For example, California's English Learner Roadmap³ offers a path by outlining rigorous expectations for their schools. Accordingly, we believe a national model under ESSA could borrow from the state's best ideas by requiring all states to:

- Align Title I and Title III grants around evidenced-based practices to support all typologies of ELs in order to ensure that they get the support they need to succeed.
 - ESSA needs to require states to implement uniform criteria for identifying, monitoring, and exiting ELs, using appropriate assessments and advancing the professional development necessary to use the assessment results when exiting students from EL services. We believe this would increase graduating rates and constitute a key lever for effective system improvement.
 - ESSA needs to recognize that ELs are more than one subgroup. Districts will need to and be able to identify students more precisely (e.g., newcomers, long-term ELs, students with interrupted formal education, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students). This change necessitates educational approaches that are differentiated and responsive to the student's typology.
 - ESSA should encourage educators to use best practices for serving ELs. Current research supports the need to attend to the following instructional factors:
 - Explicit literacy instruction especially in the early grades
 - Peer-assisted and small-group learning opportunities
 - Providing academic language support during content area instruction, balanced with structured explicit opportunities for oral and written language skills development
 - Appropriate assessment in various forms (e.g., formative, benchmark, summative) to understand and support student learning
 - Processes related to social-emotional development and identity formation
 - Professional development for teachers and school administrators who evaluate teachers' needs to include knowledge and practice in the use of evidenced-based approaches to serve the diverse typologies.
 - Culturally and linguistically responsive assessment tools and practices need to be established in order to track growth and provide adequate support to all EL typologies, as well as the data to evaluate any intervention approach.

- Increase to 10% from 5% the portion of Title III funding that can be allocated to professional development in evidence-based practices for each student subgroup or typology, as well as assessment tools to identify and monitor the progress of ELs in order to ensure their academic success. Currently, in Portland Public Schools in Oregon, EL specialists and teachers receive 90 minutes of professional development per month, but elsewhere the state and in other states such as Ohio, EL specialists have no requirements for ongoing professional development beyond the initial license. A deeper understanding of each student's diverse needs and the teaching and assessment practices necessary to support them, as well as new exiting criteria, will subsequently require additional professional development.

The Need

Educators know that not all students learn the same way or have the same needs. Misidentification of students can have different impacts, such as a student being thought to have a learning disability, when in fact they have simply lacked consistent instruction. When U.S.-born ELs are placed in classrooms designed for newcomers, the consequences in their academic achievement and emotional well-being can be damaging.⁴

Some estimates in the past 20 years point to a growing number of ELs as American-born. In 2001, a report from the Dallas public schools stated that 70% of their secondary EL students were born in the United States. Nationally over the past 20 years, the vast majority of ELs are American-born. We see a compelling need to support this group of students who are largely American citizens.

While ESSA made big steps forward for ELs in making English-language proficiency standards (ELPS) part of the accountability system, it did not do enough to help all ELs succeed. One missing link is the lack of understanding that ELs are not, in fact, one subgroup. ELs are different typologies and each requires its own set of supports and services.

EL student subgroups with distinct needs include:

The long-term EL (LTEL) is a student who has been enrolled in a U.S. school for six years or more but has stagnated in the development of English skills, which makes the student struggle in school. This typology of learner needs:

- Focused instruction on the lagging skills: Some benefit mostly from vocabulary expansion and grammar.
- Rigorous instruction: Schools often continue putting these students in classes that are designed for newcomers. They need to enroll in mainstream classes that demand a higher level from students, supported by trained educators who understand how the students' skills will develop and what instructional strategies support that development.

Newly Arrived with Adequate Schooling: Students who have recently arrived from countries where they experienced continued education and development of academic skills in their native language. They need:

- Teachers to use this students' educational background as a strength to develop skills in English. For some, their native language allows for an easy transition into English literacy. Many English words are very close to Spanish words, so students from Spanish-speaking countries can more easily make connections than those with other home languages.

- All newly arrived students need initial instruction that focuses on the social aspects of language, coupled with school- and home-based vocabulary would support their initial learning of English.

Newly Arrived with Inadequate or Interrupted Schooling: Some students will arrive in the United States from communities where schooling was inconsistent, not available, or frequently interrupted. They need:

- Proper assessment to determine their literacy levels in their home language as well as their skills in other academic areas. This would allow for more proper placement. Trained teachers need to develop a scope and sequence of academic standards and support that fills these gaps and attends to their varying needs in English.

Second-generation immigrants: Second-generation immigrants often grow up in homes with a language other than English or a mixture of English and their home language. They may be fully bicultural. Students included in this category are those who immigrated to the United States as babies or minors and who have fully adapted to American life while also speaking a home language other than English. This type of student can reach native levels of fluency, but the connection with the culture and language they have at home can influence the way they express themselves in English. Code switching is particularly common among these students and must be seen as an added asset in their linguistic repertoire.

A Compelling Need for Adequate Assessment

All of these different instructional approaches to student learning require the development of adequate assessment tools and assessment practices that ensure students' progress is measured against comparable student peers by typology, not measured against monolingual American students.

According to an analysis by the Migration Policy Institute, ESSA falls significantly short in other areas as well.⁵ It lacks guidance for states to address ELs who are unable to meet exit criteria past the maximum timeline or who do not reach proficiency before they age out of the system. Furthermore, ESSA includes little to no accountability for states who do not meet the academic and achievement and ELP goals as set up by the law.

According to data from Migration Policy Institute, EL students from Ohio who are most likely to exit EL programs are in grades two through four. In grade four, almost 30% will exit, but by the time they are in high school, only 7% will exit EL programs. In state testing, 45% of ELs score proficient, compared to non-ELs who score 63%. By high school, 15% of ELs score proficient on state testing as compared to non-ELs, who score 56%. This data further illustrates the need to view ELs in terms of their typologies. In Ohio's Lorain City School District, 26% of the EL students are LTELs. A successful component in Lorain is a system-wide monitoring protocol.

MPI data also notes that in Oregon, ELs experience a significant academic achievement gap in reading, math, and science, when compared to all student groups. For example, only 16% of all ELs in fourth grade met academic standards in English in 2017 assessments, more than 30 percentage points from the general population. This gap only increased as these students experienced more schooling, growing to a 60 percentage-point difference by the time the students arrived in 11th grade.⁶

Impact

ELs are a heterogeneous group of students and graduation rates highlight these differences. According to West Ed, only 49% of LTELs are likely to graduate, while 52% of recent arrivals will graduate within four years.⁷ A former EL will graduate 81% of the time and 85% of non-ELs will graduate on time.⁸

Focus needs to be on the typologies of ELs in order to close the significant discrepancy of ELs who test out and graduate at a timely rate and those who remain LTELs and do not graduate. It is imperative to address this situation as the LTEL population is growing significantly. From New York to California, LTELs range from 23%-74% of the EL population. In California alone the LTEL population in 2008 was at 62% and by 2017, was at 82%.⁹

From our own experiences in classrooms in Oregon and Ohio, we know the COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated the gaps already existing for ELs. ELs often include students living in poverty, with unstable housing and parents with low-wage jobs. These realities highlight the need for U.S. schools to support these diverse learners in a more equitable way, appropriate to their level of need.

More uniform identification, assessment, and evidenced-based instructional practices are necessary in order to recognize and adequately serve the different typologies of ELs, close achievement gaps, and help all ELs reach their full potential.

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NILSL

Policy Memorandum: A Financial Dilemma: Addressing the Pathways for Latinos in Higher Education

Sergio Jara Arroyos, Director, Alumni Strategy and Engagement, Teach For America Los Angeles

Victor Ruiz, Executive Director, Esperanza Inc.

Who We Are

Victor Ruiz, Executive Director of Esperanza Inc. in Cleveland, Ohio. Our mission is centered on improving the academic achievement of Hispanic students in Greater Cleveland. We do this by providing Latinx children and their families with support services as well as by advocating on their behalf, so that they can graduate high school, pursue, and successfully complete postsecondary education. Our work has proven to be successful, with Cleveland's Latinx youth having one of the strongest high school graduation rates in the state of Ohio. Considering that less than 10 years ago, seven out of 10 of our youth were dropping out of high school, we still have a lot of work to do, because fewer than 40% of our Latinx youth graduate with a postsecondary degree.

Sergio Jara Arroyos, Director of Alumni Strategy and Engagement at Teach For America (TFA) Los Angeles. A former Title I early childhood educator (ECE) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Denver, Colorado, Sergio grew up in the Yakima Valley in Washington as a migrant farmworker, following the harvest. Sergio became the first person in his family to attend university, navigating the complexities both leading up to and during higher education. After working in the classroom, Sergio became a grassroots organizer focusing on school board campaigns to ensure that students and families have access to an equitable education. As a member of the TFA, he develops leadership development programs for educators of color and LGBTQIA+ educators. LA Unified Schools has 123,579 students who are learning how to speak English proficiently. Of the total student population in LAUSD, 73.4% are Latino.

As fellows with UnidosUS through the National Institute of Latino School Leaders (NILSL) program, we are representative of the work being done in our home communities, while also advocating at the national level. This fellowship is focused on bridging the divide between policy and practice and training effective advocates for policy efforts that lead to increased educational outcomes for Latino and EL students.

Our Ask

- Federal funding has not kept up with the growth in HSIs (Hispanic-Serving institutions). Due to the tremendous growth in HSIs, we are asking for an increase in funding to HSIs by \$20 million to partially meet the growing demand. This amount represents about a 10% increase from current funding levels.
- In order to gain clarity on allocation of funds to academic and social support services, we are asking to establish transparency measures for institutions receiving Title V Section A funding.
- In order to encourage high-quality programming and establish best practices (for HSIs, emerging HSIs, and non-HSIs), we ask for a requirement that Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) to set targets, track, and report on student services.

The Need

While Hispanic enrollment at HSIs has increased from 22% to 37% since 2000, the graduation rate for Hispanics within six years was 10% points lower than that of Whites.¹ This gap is wider for four-year graduation rates at 14%. Latinx students have unique barriers to attaining undergraduate degrees, including the following:

- **Affordability:** Latinos borrow less for their education than any other racial/ethnic demographic group, with an average loan amount of \$6,571 for Latino students versus an average of \$6,720 for all students.²
- **Access and retention:** Forty-one percent of Latinx students attend two-year institutions, which can make their path towards a four-year degree longer. Another 30% attend private institutions (for and not-for-profit), which can be more expensive and not provide as many support services.³
- **Availability of support services:** We all know that support services are critical to student success. Unfortunately, only 29% of HSIs use their funding for student support services. Additional uses of funds include faculty development and improving facilities for distance learning.⁴

While growth in enrollment is encouraging, student completion is not: only 24% of Latinx students attain an associate's degree or higher, compared to 44% of all U.S. adults.⁵ COVID-19 has further exacerbated pre-existing barriers and access to Latinx students.

Analysis done by Excelencia in Education on recent CARES Act funding revealed the following:

- Although Latino students' needs were reflected in the formula and the amount allocated to HSIs, the scale of their need was undercounted.⁶
- By allocating funds based on FTE, institutions that enroll high concentrations of students part-time received less funding per student than institutions with more full-time students.⁷

As a result of HSIs having a higher proportion of part-time students, the funding received from the CARES Act was significantly lower than at non-HSI schools. As a result of limited funding, HSIs are unable to provide adequate support to Latinx students, leading to delays and declines in Hispanic student completion rates.

The Impact

We believe that by increasing funding to HSIs, we'll be able to build institutional capacity while improving the quality of education. Additionally, greater transparency of funding allocation and target benchmarks of best practices will allow us to ensure HSIs go beyond enrollment thresholds and focus on degree completion. While Latinx students' enrollment continues to increase, limited funding to HSIs risks the Latinx's contribution to civic engagement, a strong economy, and our democracy. Hispanic-serving institutions play a crucial role in our higher education ecosystem. HSIs provide pathways to evolve the conversation of enrollment to completion for Hispanic students in higher education.

Endnotes

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- 2 Excelencia in Education, "Latinos in Higher Education: Compilation of Fast Facts," April 2019, <https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/publications/latinos-higher-education-compilation-fast-facts> (accessed January 31, 2021).
- 3 Excelencia in Education, "Latinos in Higher Education: Compilation of Fast Facts."
- 4 Excelencia in Education, "Latinos in Higher Education: Compilation of Fast Facts."
- 5 Excelencia in Education, "Latinos in Higher Education: Compilation of Fast Facts."
- 6 Excelencia in Education, "Hispanic Serving Institutions and the CARES ACT: Preliminary Analysis of Funding," June 2020, <https://www.edexcelencia.org/HSIs-and-CARES-Act-Preliminary-Analysis-Funding-PDF> (accessed January 31, 2021).
- 7 Excelencia in Education, "Hispanic Serving Institutions and the CARES ACT."