

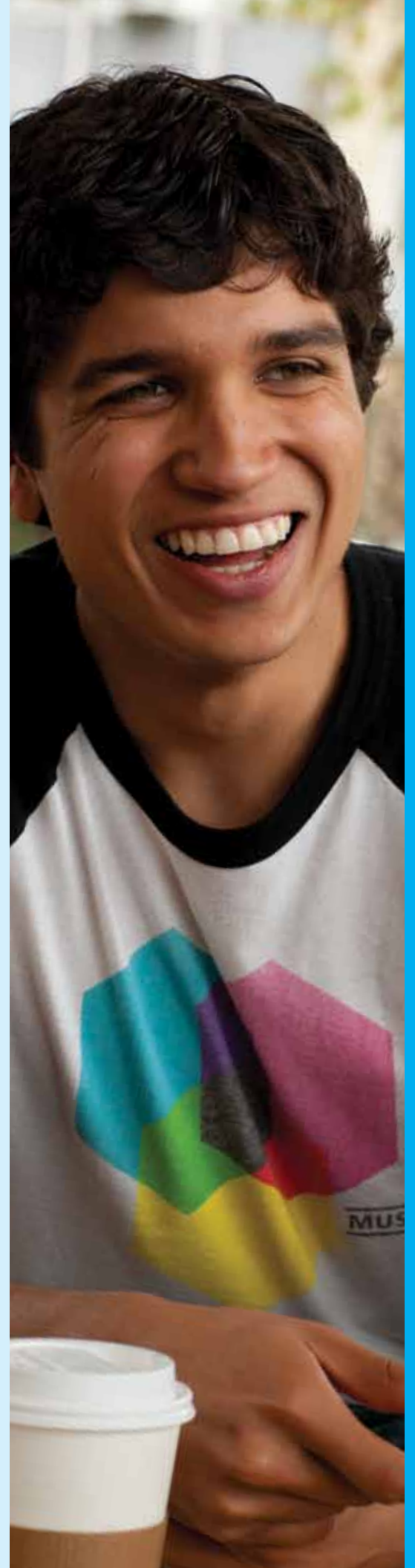
# The College Completion Agenda State Policy Guide

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**Latino Edition**

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Produced in collaboration with:



## **Acknowledgments**

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# **The College Completion Agenda**

State  
Policy Guide

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**Latino Edition**

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In today's knowledge-driven economy a college degree is critical to the success of a competitive U.S. workforce. As a result, the federal government, leading foundations and national organizations have articulated a national goal to significantly increase college completion. To inform the policy efforts to reach this national goal, the College Board released *The College Completion Agenda State Policy Guide* in 2010, which focused on 10 key recommendations from early childhood to adult education to improve college completion.



State public policy has been an important tool for improving the educational preparation and opportunity for many communities. However, without concerted statewide efforts it will continue to be difficult to substantially expand opportunities to accelerate higher education attainment and workforce preparation. Over the next 15 years, the states will experience a profound demographic shift as the baby boomer generation retires. In many states, this process has already begun. Following in their footsteps in the workplace will be today's young people, an increasing number of whom are Hispanic.<sup>1</sup> To ensure the high caliber of tomorrow's workforce and civic leadership, all states must act today to address the educational achievement of the fastest growing community in the United States — Latinos.

The College Board, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and *Excelencia* in Education have come together to create *The College Completion Agenda State Policy Guide: Latino Edition*. The guide is framed by the 10 recommendations made by the Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Higher Education convened by the College Board and is intended to help policymakers generate solutions to the challenges facing Latino youth and their families so that they can prepare, access and complete college in greater numbers. The guide provides background, research and issues for legislators to be aware of, and promising state policy efforts to increase the number of Latinos in the U.S. who earn a postsecondary degree.

# A Profile of Latinos

## Elementary to undergraduate education

Hispanics currently represent about 16 percent of the U.S. population and are the fastest-growing racial/ethnic group in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> Further, Hispanics represent over 20 percent of the school-age population.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the number of Hispanic children in America's public schools has changed the face of education across the country. Between 2000 and 2008, the percentage of Latino students in schools increased from 17 percent to 21 percent. During the same period, the percentage of African American students remained the same, while the percentage of white students decreased from 61 percent to 56 percent. Latino children are also more likely to live in poverty (27 percent), as compared to the national average (18 percent).<sup>4</sup>





Public perceptions of Latino students are often guided by a limited and inaccurate profile of the population. In turn, this faulty profile inaccurately guides program and policy efforts aimed to serve this population. For example, it is commonly assumed that the majority of Latinos are immigrants, high school dropouts and English language learners (ELL). Although Latinos in the U.S. are more likely than most other racial/ethnic groups to fit this profile, the majority of Latinos do not fit this profile. Close to 90 percent of Hispanic students enrolled in K–12 education are United States–born or are legal residents. Further, more than 80 percent of Latino school-age children speak English with no difficulty. Census data show that in 2008, 67 percent of Latinos ages 18–24 and 62 percent of Latinos ages 25 and over had completed high school.<sup>5</sup> Citing current data about Latinos puts their profile in perspective and will better inform state and national policy. However, clarifying this profile of Latinos does not imply that the issues of immigration, language acquisition and high school completion are not important or relevant policy issues. In fact, these are also critical issues to address.

Latino academic success from early childhood to adult education and college completion is critical to the strength of the U.S. economy, as these students represent a large and growing share of the student population and future workforce in the United States. Latinos account for more than half of the nation's growth since 2000<sup>6</sup> and currently represent 22 percent of public school enrollment,<sup>7</sup> up from 11 percent in 1986.<sup>8</sup> In addition, while the majority of Latino students are not English language learners (ELLs), they do represent a high proportion of all ELLs; and ELLs are the fastest-growing segment of the school-age population.<sup>9</sup> While ELLs constitute more than 10 percent of the nation's total public school population, ELL student enrollment has increased at nearly seven times the rate of total student enrollment.<sup>10</sup>

As of 2009, 19.2 percent of Hispanics ages 25–34 in the U.S. had earned an associate degree or higher, compared to 48.7 percent of white students, 29.4 percent of African American students and 69.1 percent of Asian students.<sup>11</sup> Issues of college counseling, admission, financial aid, completion and adult education all impact this low level of completion. Given the demographic growth of Latinos in the United States, the need for a well-educated workforce for the nation to be economically competitive in the global economy, and the current educational attainment of Latinos, is a critical public policy issue. Given the relationship between higher education and economic productivity, investing in efforts to increase Latino degree attainment is in the state and the national interest.

### **Challenges facing Latino students**

From the onset of early schooling, Latinos are entering school well behind their white peers for a variety of reasons. For example, Early Head Start, one of the most effective early childhood programs for Latinos, reaches only 3 percent of all eligible Latino families, leaving many Latino families without services that would build critical preliteracy skills.<sup>12</sup> The early disadvantage that Latinos face continues, and by the fourth grade, a mere 14 percent of Latinos read at levels that are proficient or above, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).<sup>13</sup> The achievement gap is even more apparent by the end of high school where Hispanic 12th-graders, on average, read at approximately the same level as white eighth-graders.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, only 56 percent of Hispanic students who entered ninth grade complete the 12th grade and graduate with a regular high school diploma, as compared to 77 percent of white students.<sup>15</sup>

## Factors influencing low achievement

Various factors affect the low achievement of elementary and secondary Latino students. A recent publication by NCLR<sup>16</sup> identified the following barriers facing Latino students:

- **Highly segregated and high-poverty schools.** In 2008, nearly half of Hispanic and African American students (45 percent and 44 percent, respectively) attended a high-poverty school, while only 6 percent of their white peers attended such schools.<sup>17</sup> Latinos and African Americans constitute 80 percent of the student population in extreme-poverty schools, where 90 to 100 percent of the population is considered low income.<sup>18</sup>
- **Lack of access to effective teachers.** For example, in California about 16 percent of the teachers in schools attended by Hispanic students do not have adequate credentials, which is twice the percentage for schools predominantly attended by white students.
- **Linguistic barriers.** Forty-three percent of first-generation Latino children, 21 percent of second generation, and 5 percent in the third generation or higher are not fluent in English.
- **Limited support in the native language.** Nationwide, 31 percent of ELL high school students have teachers who do not have a major, minor or certification in the field of bilingual education.
- **Inadequate funding for programs that effectively serve Latino students.** Title III, the main federal funding stream for providing language instruction for ELLs, is often underfunded and misused by local school districts.

## Barriers to access

After completing high school, Latino students also encounter barriers in accessing and completing a higher education, including the following:

- **First-generation college attendee.** Many Latino students are the first in their family to enroll in college; therefore, many may have limited knowledge of the complex admission and financial processes to access and complete higher education. Between 2007 and 2008, about 50 percent of Hispanics who enrolled in college had parents whose highest level of education was a high school diploma or less. In comparison, 45 percent of African American students and 28 percent of white students were the first in their family to go to college.<sup>19</sup>
- **Remediation.** Latino students are more likely to be placed into lower academic tracks throughout their secondary school or to be in high poverty schools, thus affecting their college preparation. In 2007-08, 45 percent of Hispanic students had taken a remedial course, compared to 38 percent of all students.<sup>20</sup>
- **Financial constraints require work.** Many Latino students have other responsibilities (family and /or financial) while attending school. In 2007-08, 43 percent of Hispanic students worked part time and 33 percent worked full time, with an average of about 30 hours a week.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond this broad profile of Latinos in education and their challenges, there are two issues that represent a minority of Latinos but dominate policy conversations and are addressed here briefly to provide additional context for this guide: (1) English language learners in elementary and secondary education, and (2) undocumented immigrant students enrolling in college.

## Latinos who are learning English

Approximately 70 percent of all Latino elementary and secondary students speak a language other than English at home and approximately 18 percent speak English with difficulty.<sup>22</sup> These students are eligible to receive services to acquire English language proficiency. Each state develops its own criteria to determine eligibility for services, as well as criteria for exiting services. Programming for ELLs varies greatly, from programs that use students' native language to full English immersion. Many ELLs require specialized instructional services, especially at the secondary level, so that they can acquire the English language skills they need to master complex academic content at the same high levels as all students.

Although ELLs have in common the need to acquire English language proficiency, this group is actually quite varied, and thus the supports and services they need will vary accordingly. Policymakers and school leaders must recognize the diversity of the ELL population and the relevance of student literacy histories and background content knowledge.<sup>23</sup> Research has found that literacy skills in one language can be harnessed and transferred to a second language.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, a student's formal education and level of literacy in his or her native language should shape the nature of the instruction the student receives when learning English. Determining the students' experiences and familiarity with instructional content will provide insight into which supports and services are necessary and will lead to the same outcome for all English language learners:<sup>25</sup> college and career readiness.<sup>26</sup>

## Undocumented immigrant students

The overwhelming majority of Latino students in college are U.S.-born or legal residents (98 percent).<sup>27</sup> However, there is a small proportion of college-age Latinos (as well as students from other racial/ethnic groups) who have been educated in public high schools and have graduated college ready who are undocumented and considered foreign/international students for college enrollment and financial aid purposes. While national policy has stagnated over the last 10 years in attempts to create opportunities for many of these college-ready students, 12 states have passed laws that facilitate access to those undocumented students who have graduated from their high schools. Several other states have explicitly banned access to their public institutions of higher education. Providing opportunities for college-ready students further demonstrates the nation's commitment to those who can contribute to our economy, grow an educated citizenry and strengthen America's global competitiveness.



## Notes

1. The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.
2. Passel, J., Cohn, D., and Lopez, M.H., *Census 2010: 50 million Latinos, Hispanics account for more than half of nation's growth in past decade* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/140.pdf>
3. Fry, R., and Gonzales, F., *One-in-five and growing fast: A profile of Hispanic public school students* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2008). <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/92.pdf>
4. Aud, S., Fox, M.A., and KewalRamani, A., *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups* (Washington, DC: NCES, 2010).
5. Santiago, D., *Roadmap for Ensuring America's Future: By Increasing Latino College Completion*, (Washington, DC: Excelencia in Education, 2011).
6. Passel, J., Cohn, D., and Lopez, M.H., *Census 2010: 50 million Latinos, Hispanics account for more than half of nation's growth in past decade*. (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/140.pdf>
7. Castillo, D., and Lukan, J., *Access to Common Standards for All: An Advocacy Tool Kit for Supporting Success* (Washington, DC: NCLR, 2011).
8. Planty, M., et al., *The Condition of Education 2008*. (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2008).
9. National Council of Teachers of English, *English language learners: A policy research brief*. (Urbana, IL: The National Council of Teachers of English, 2008). <http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/PolicyResearch/ELLResearchBrief.pdf>. Also see: *English language learners: Supplemental resources for NCTE's policy research brief*. (<http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/PolicyResearch/ELLClips.pdf>)
10. Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students, *The Growing Numbers of Limited English Proficient Students: 1995/96-2005/06* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2007).
11. U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey*, 2009.
12. Beltran, E., and Dolan, S., *New Leaders, New Directions: Tools for Advancing an Early Childhood Agenda for the Latino Community* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2009).
13. The Education Trust, *Latino Achievement in America* (Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 2005).
14. Office of Vocational and Adult Education, “High School Reading: Key Issue Brief” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2002), cited in Alliance for Excellent Education (2008), African American Students and U.S. High Schools Factsheet.
15. Christopher Swanson, “Graduation by the Numbers.”
16. Castillo, D., and Lukan, J., *Access to Common Standards for All: An Advocacy Tool Kit for Supporting Success* (Washington, DC: NCLR, 2011).
17. Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., and Tahan, K., *The Condition of Education 2011* (NCES 2011-033) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2011)., U.S. Government Printing Office. Figure 28-1. [http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011033\\_5.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011033_5.pdf)
18. Orfield, G., and Lee, C., *Why Segregation Matters*.
19. Santiago, D., *Roadmap for Ensuring America's Future: By Increasing Latino College Completion* (Washington, DC: Excelencia in Education, 2011).
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Aud, S., Fox, M.A., and KewalRamani, A., *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups* (Washington, DC: NCES, 2010).
23. Suárez-Orozco, C., and Suárez-Orozco, M.M., *Children of immigration* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2001).
24. Cárdenas-Hagan, E., Carlson, C.D., and Pollard-Durodola, S., The cross-linguistic transfer of early literacy skills: The role of initial L1 and L2 skills and language of instruction, *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 38 (2007): 249–259.
25. ELL students differ in various ways, including level of oral English proficiency, literacy ability in both the heritage language and English, and cultural backgrounds. Those born in the United States often develop conversational language abilities in English but lack academic language proficiency. Newcomers, on the other hand, need to develop both conversational and academic English. Education previous to entering U.S. schools helps determine students' literacy levels in the native language. Some ELLs may have age-/grade-level skills, while others have limited or no literacy because of the quality of previous schooling, interrupted schooling due to wars or migration, and other circumstances.
26. Suárez-Orozco, C., Suárez-Orozco, M.M., and Todorova, I., *Learning a new land: immigrant students in an American society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).
27. *Excelencia in Education*, Analysis of data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Education Statistics, 2008).



Recommendation **One**

# Early Childhood

UNO

## One

Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families

## Two

Improve middle and high school college and career counseling

## Three

Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs

## Four

Align the K–12 education system with international standards and college admission expectations

## Five

Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention

## Six

Clarify and simplify the admission process

## Seven

Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent

## Eight

Keep college affordable

## Nine

Dramatically increase college completion rates

## Ten

Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs

## Background

Latinos account for nearly 24 percent of all infants and toddlers in the U.S. and are the fastest-growing demographic group. However, young Latino children are least likely to attend center-based preschool programs and most likely to stay at home with relatives when compared to other racial and ethnic groups.<sup>28</sup> When Latinos begin school, they are more likely than their white peers to be retained in the early grades, an indicator that has been correlated with a higher risk of dropping out of school.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, participation rates for Latinos in preschool programs decreased from 53 percent to 48 percent between 2005 and 2009, while they remained unchanged for African American and white preschoolers.<sup>30</sup>

The gap in Latino achievement is evident by the time they start preschool and grows exponentially through college, with Latinos exhibiting the lowest rate of college completion: only 13 percent have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 33 percent of whites and 20 percent of African Americans.<sup>31</sup> For students who attended early childhood programs, research indicates evidence of long-term positive outcomes, such as reductions in grade repetition, high school dropout rates and teen pregnancy.<sup>32</sup> Clearly access to high-quality preschool programs is critical to improving rates of high school graduation and college completion for Latinos.

# What Legislators Need to Know

In order to increase access for Latino children to high-quality early learning programs, it is important to first understand the current conditions of preschool education in a state. Legislators may seek answers to the following questions in order to evaluate the condition of preschool education for young children in their state:

- Where are the early childhood programs located, and which children do they reach?
- How is outreach for these programs currently done? How can outreach strategies be improved to increase Latino enrollment in early childhood programs?
- How does the state recruit and retain effective early childhood teachers?
- How can current early childhood programs better integrate families into the programming?
- How are early childhood programs providing for English language learners?
- What data systems are in place to better understand the sociodemographic characteristics and language needs of young children?

# Research

## Young Latinos lack access to high-quality preschool programs.

The reasons young Latino children do not attend preschool are varied but they are frequently exacerbated by family poverty and language status. Structural barriers include too few programs, lack of bilingual staff and lack of affordable programs.<sup>33</sup> Latino parents value early learning but often have difficulty accessing it in their neighborhoods.<sup>34</sup>

In a study completed in Chicago in March 2009,<sup>35</sup> parents themselves identified barriers to participation in preschool programs. One of the barriers the parents identified was confusion and frustration in determining preschool options for their children. Different programs have different eligibility requirements and complex enrollment procedures that require parents to disclose information they may not have (e.g., Social Security number) or they may not want to share (e.g., income status). Similarly, a GAO study found that children of ELL parents were less likely to participate in early childhood programs because they were unaware of child-care assistance provided by the federal government, among other challenges such as communicating with English-speaking child-care providers.<sup>36</sup>

Shortages of bilingual staff also present a challenge for ELL parents. The lack of bilingual staff can hinder not only the enrollment process, but also parent applications for subsidies and active participation in the program if parents are not able to effectively communicate with program staff. Similarly, the lack of available translated materials can hinder enrollment in early childhood programs. When ECE programs do not have their application forms translated into other languages or are poorly translated, ELL parents often become discouraged from enrolling their children.

Transportation was also identified as a major barrier. Most preschool programs do not offer transportation and parents find it difficult to access public transportation for those programs that are not within walking distance from their homes. Even for those programs within walking distance, parents reported not feeling safe in high-crime neighborhoods.<sup>37</sup>

Scheduling was reported as another issue for parents, as the hours of operation of preschool programs frequently did not match those of the parents' work schedules. Finally, although the vast majority of Latino parents understand the importance of preschool programs, they are often out of reach due to cost or scheduling.<sup>38</sup>

## **Improving the quality of early learning programs is critical to ensuring success for Latino children.**

Latinos who participate in preschool programs demonstrate greater gains than African American or white children.<sup>39</sup> Although most Latino children are exposed to English at home, nearly 30 percent live in families where English is not spoken.<sup>40</sup>

Research has demonstrated that preschool programs will only have positive academic and social outcomes on children from low-income backgrounds if they are high-quality programs.<sup>41</sup> In addition to basic quality indicators, such as class size, student-to-teacher ratios and safety requirements, research suggests that in order for preschool programs to be the most effective, they must have developmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction, strong teacher competencies and high levels of family engagement. The need for high-quality preschool programs means that the elements outlined above, which contribute to successful programs for Latino preschoolers, should be deliberately integrated into new or existing programs.

A critical element of successful preschool programs is highly qualified teachers. Many early childhood education (ECE) programs do not require teachers to have a college degree, but all should require the teaching staff to have early childhood training. Partnership programs with institutions of higher education (IHEs) can play a vital role in encouraging staff to pursue associate degrees with an emphasis in ECE. These partnership programs between ECE providers and IHEs can lead to higher quality care and programs.

In addition, evidence suggests that students who have native language support and instructors who speak their language have better socioemotional outcomes. A recent study conducted by the Erikson Institute showed that only 7 percent of early childhood teacher training programs require students to complete an internship in a multicultural setting, pointing toward the need to develop more strategies for helping ECE professionals better understand the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.<sup>42</sup>

Research has found that dual language programs are highly effective with young Latino children. These programs continue to develop Spanish skills at high levels while simultaneously teaching English. Dual language programs support the development of English language skills by fostering literacy development in the native language. These programs have excellent long-term results for all participants (including native English speakers), as students typically outperform their monolingual peers.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, young children learning two languages demonstrate more neural activity in the parts of the brain used for language processing.<sup>44</sup>

Another critical element to ensuring a high-quality ECE program is having an effective family engagement component that works to improve the literacy, language and life skills of both the parents and their children. Federal programs — such as Even Start, which supports family literacy projects that integrate early childhood education, adult literacy, parenting education, and interactive parent and child literacy activities for low-income families — have demonstrated positive outcomes for Latino children and their families. Both Even Start and Early Head Start have demonstrated that Latino children benefit from these programs through increased reading activities, increased English vocabulary and better cognitive development. These programs incorporate parents and caregivers by providing training, support and referrals to community resources.<sup>45</sup>

And the benefits of early childhood education persist beyond elementary schools. Given that Latinos drop out at a higher rate than any other group,<sup>46</sup> ensuring that they are prepared to be successful from the beginning of their academic career is imperative.



### **Early childhood programs must address the needs of young English language learners.**

Although not all Latino children are ELLs, 75 percent of the ELL school-age populations speak Spanish at home.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, 40 percent of these children are between age 3 and 8.<sup>48</sup> States need to provide high-quality instruction that addresses the need for ELLs to develop academic English language skills. Teaching academic English requires teachers to understand the complexities of learning a second language and to know how to scaffold instruction so that students have the foundations for learning increasingly complex material in later grades. Further, the strategic use of Spanish in classrooms can support the development of English language skills.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, incorporating the social competencies of young ELLs into classrooms improves their social adjustment. Recent research has found that children from Mexican immigrant families are rated as more socially competent than other kindergarten peers. These findings point to the strengths of children who are often viewed as at risk for academic failure.<sup>50</sup>



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# State Policy Approaches

As policymakers and advocates develop preschool policy proposals, the needs of Latino children must be addressed. There is significant research to guide this policymaking process. There are two overall criteria that can improve the school readiness of Latino children: access to and quality of early childhood programs. The challenge will be whether policymakers and advocates act on these to promote expanded access to high-quality preschool programs for all children, including Latinos and ELLs. We have developed the following policy priorities that support the school readiness of Hispanic and ELL children and put them on a path toward success.

## Quality

### **Partner with institutions of higher education to increase teacher effectiveness.**

Partnership programs with institutions of higher education (IHEs) can have a fundamental role in meeting the demand for effective teachers by providing additional course work to ECE staff to ensure that they are prepared to work with Latino children and their families. Additionally, these programs can encourage staff to pursue associate degrees, since these programs have been linked to higher-quality care and programs. ECE programs should strive to hire a diverse teaching staff that reflects the students and the families served.

### **Support programs that promote meaningful parental involvement and family literacy opportunities.**

Forty-three percent of Latino children come from families where mothers have less than a high school education. In order for ECE initiatives to be effective for Latino children, programs must have an effective family engagement component that works to improve the literacy, language and life skills of both parents and children.

### **Engage ELL experts and service providers by including them on governing boards.**

The inclusion of Latino experts, researchers and providers on governing boards such as State Early Childhood Advisory Councils help ensure that best practices for Latino students and families are being implemented.



**Low Cost**



**Medium Cost**

### **Create professional development programs that attract and retain culturally and linguistically diverse educators.**

As states reexamine their professional development systems, it is important that these types of programs have sufficient resources to grow and expand, and that they are accessible to ECE educators who speak languages other than English. The most promising strategies for recruiting and retaining the ECE workforce include programs that provide scholarships, tuition assistance, flexible schedules and increases in compensation.

### **Partner with institutions of higher education to develop innovative course work.**

IHEs play a critical role in the professional development of the ECE workforce. State Early Childhood Advisory Councils should work with IHEs in their state to develop course work to help ECE educators better understand how a second language is acquired, how to work with diverse populations of children, and how to effectively offer credit-bearing course work and training in languages other than English.

### **Develop early learning guidelines that take into account the learning needs of ELL children by creating benchmarks related to English-language development.**

NCLR research revealed that very few states have early learning standards that take into account the learning needs of ELL children.<sup>51</sup> As states consider mechanisms to increase the quality of preschool programs, legislation should incentivize states to develop comprehensive, inclusive early learning standards that will create a demand for intentional and effective instructional methods and professional development strategies that will help all teachers understand how to monitor progress for young ELL children.

### **Implement a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) that measures different aspects of program quality, including cultural and language competence.**

A QRIS system should include measures in how well programs are meeting community needs, as well as giving precise attention to issues of race, language and culture. In taking these issues into consideration, states need to ensure that these systems are part of an overall set of policies, regulations and practices that supports quality. While not the only component of quality, cultural and language competence and relevance needs to be a core component of QRIS. In communicating the quality of programs by using a QRIS, parents are empowered to be savvy consumers of early care and education programs by understanding which program may best suit their children.



**High Cost**

### **Establish a strong infrastructure for effective ELL instruction.**

State leaders must ensure that there is a broader infrastructure in states to generate more culturally and linguistically appropriate instruction. In order for ECE programs to meet the needs of ELL children and families, broader systems must be in place, including early learning guidelines that delineate outcomes for ELLs and strong educator core competencies that demonstrate what educators should know about working with ELLs. Both strong early learning foundations and educator core competencies serve as a guide for professional development and drive the creation of course work, training and instructional strategies.

### **Develop quality instruction and assessments for ELLs.**

ECE programs across the country have developed innovative and effective strategies for working with ELLs. States should improve the quality of zero-to-five programs by incentivizing local districts and schools to replicate successful approaches of teaching and assessing young ELLs, such as dual-language programs.

#### **Access**

### **Develop partnerships with Latino-serving community-based organizations to provide effective family outreach.**

Much like federal policymakers, state policymakers should also look to develop partnerships with immigrant-serving institutions, faith-based organizations, and community-based organizations to provide effective outreach and share information with Latino families.



**Low Cost**

### **Develop outreach strategies targeting Latino, immigrant, ELL and geographically isolated families to ensure equitable access to services.**

As the population of young Latino children continues to grow, early childhood education programs should develop family engagement strategies that recognize the importance of family in Latino culture and the desire of parents and families to be involved in their children's education. Such strategies include identifying points of contact for ELL families, such as immigrant-serving institutions, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations, to provide effective outreach and to share information. Additionally, programs must be able to, at minimum, translate materials into other languages and conduct in-language outreach to ensure that information is accessible to families who speak languages other than English.

### **Promote the use of Title I of ESEA funds for early learning programs.**

Although preschool is an allowable use of Title I funds, very few school districts use the funds for this purpose. States should use Title I funds for early learning and provide technical assistance to school districts to invest in preschool programs.



### **Establish and strengthen a mixed-service delivery system (public/private, center based and home based) that leverages the expertise of community-based organizations to provide and expand ECE services.**

A mixed-delivery system would be a more viable option for serving Latinos because so many of the public schools in low-income Latino neighborhoods are already overcrowded and have little room to serve preschoolers.

### **Establish capital subsidies for the renovation or construction of preschool facilities.**

One of the biggest challenges for programs is balancing the cost of financing the development of facilities with the cost of delivering high-quality preschool services. States should develop set-asides for capital subsidies in order to ensure that all communities, particularly low-income communities, have access to preschool programs.

### **Develop the technical capacity of preschool providers to build and support preschool facilities.**

State policymakers should develop partnerships with nonprofits that have expertise in facilities development in order to train ECE providers and school leaders in real-estate development to facilitate and demystify the process of building and renovating facilities.



### **Fund the development of facilities in communities where there are limited ECE programs.**

As states consider more investments in early learning, they must ensure equitable access to programs. Latino children often have no child care or preschool center in their neighborhood, making them less likely to enroll. Funding for the development of facilities, particularly in Latino communities, is an essential component of any preschool proposal.



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# Promising Practices

As the Latino population continues to grow, it has become clear that preschool policies have the potential to significantly impact whether these children enter school ready for success or continue to fall behind. The following promising programs highlight some of the above recommendations.

In **North Carolina**, the Child Care Services Association created the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) Early Childhood Project to address the issues of under-education, poor compensation and high turnover within the early childhood workforce. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project gives scholarships to child-care workers to complete course work in early childhood education and to increase their compensation. This program allows the recruitment of culturally and linguistically diverse individuals who may already be part of the early childhood workforce into the profession of educators.

**California's** First 5 program adopted principles on equity to successfully meet its goal of serving all of California's children regardless of their ethnic, geographical, socioeconomic or immigration status. First 5 California helps provide access to family literacy programs, early learning programs, health coverage, special needs screenings, parent education classes and other resources to help ensure that children enter school ready to learn. The principles on equity ensure that California's children from diverse populations and those with special needs are integrated into the planning and implementation of programs supported by Proposition 10.



**New Mexico** has the most explicit references of language, culture or race within components or subscales of their QRIS.<sup>52</sup> Their QRIS take into consideration New Mexico's diverse languages and cultures by rating subcomponents such as linguistically appropriate assessments and whether each child's language and culture are integral components of the daily program.

In **Pennsylvania**, the Early Childhood Partnerships (ECP) is a university–community service and research collaborative dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable children and families, especially those at developmental risk and/or with disabilities (birth to 8 years) and to enhancing the practices of the professionals who support them. ECP is affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh Schools of Education (Psychology-in-Education–Applied Developmental Psychology) and Pediatrics (affiliated with Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC).

The **Illinois** State Board of Education adopted regulations that will require all public preschools in the state to identify any children who have limited proficiency in English and provide transitional bilingual education for them.<sup>53</sup> These regulations would also require that any preschool teachers who teach in a transitional bilingual education program have certification to do so by July 1, 2014. Additionally, any school attendance center with an enrollment of 20 or more English language learners who speak the same language must operate a program of transitional bilingual education.

# Take Action

- 1 Engage ELL experts and service providers by including them on governing boards like the Early Childhood Advisory Councils.**
- 2 Develop partnerships with Latino-serving, community-based organizations to provide effective family outreach.**
- 3 Establish and strengthen a mixed-service delivery system (public/private, center based and home based) that leverages the expertise of community-based organizations to provide and expand ECE services and Pre-K–12 alignment.**
- 4 Develop the technical capacity of preschool providers to build and support preschool facilities.**
- 5 Develop outreach strategies targeting Latino, immigrant, ELL and geographically isolated families to ensure equitable access to services.**
- 6 Establish capital subsidies for the renovation or construction of preschool facilities.**
- 7 Fund the development of facilities in communities where there are limited ECE programs.**

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Recommendation **Two**

**Improve  
Middle &  
High School  
College  
& Career  
Counseling**

**DOS**

## One

Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families

## Two

Improve middle and high school college and career counseling

## Three

Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs

## Four

Align the K–12 education system with international standards and college admission expectations

## Five

Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention

## Six

Clarify and simplify the admission process

## Seven

Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent

## Eight

Keep college affordable

## Nine

Dramatically increase college completion rates

## Ten

Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs

## Background

In surveys conducted by the Public Agenda, higher education was more highly “prized and respected” among Hispanic parents than among parents in general, and Latino parents believed it was important for their children to get a college education.<sup>54</sup> However, almost half of Latino students who enroll in college are the first in their family to attend college.<sup>55</sup> Given the lower educational attainment levels of Latino parents, and the growth of the college-age Latino population, policymakers cannot assume Latino families alone have sufficient knowledge of college opportunities, choices and financing to inform their college planning.

The role of school counselors in creating awareness and providing information about preparing for college, selecting among numerous college choices and financing as well as accessing college for Latino students is critical. Studies show that effective college counseling services to inform students and parents early and often in the education process increases preparation, access and choice in postsecondary education.

School counselors can also play an important role in improving the academic achievement and college readiness of Latino students. According to a recent study, school counseling was shown to be related to increased math proficiency levels, increased reading proficiency levels, lower suspension rates, lower disciplinary rates, increased attendance rates, higher graduation rates, higher Perkins program completion rates, greater percentages of students taking college entrance examinations and higher average scores on these examinations.<sup>56</sup>

Guiding and counseling students in middle school about college opportunities inform Latino students at an earlier age to understand the long-term benefits of a higher education degree and the steps necessary to prepare academically and financially for college. This “jump start” of information provides additional opportunities for schools to engage students and families as well. Promoting college aspirations, ensuring academic preparation and college readiness, and assisting in financial aid and admission processes are also vital roles of the school counselor during middle and high school.

# What Legislators Need to Know

To evaluate the state's school counseling performance, legislators may seek answers to the following questions:

- 
- How does the counselor-to-student ratio for Latino students compare to the state norm?
- 
- What percentage of school counselors in the state are Latino?
- 
- What percentage of school counselors in the state are bilingual (Spanish/English)?
- 
- What priority issue areas do counselors in schools with large Latino populations focus on for their work?
- 
- Which public institutions in the state prepare the most school counselors in the state? Do their programs meet professional standards?

# Research

## **The student-to-counselor ratio for Latino students is high.**

The American School Counselor Association recommends one counselor for every 250 students.<sup>57</sup> However, in the 100 largest public elementary and secondary school districts in the United States, the student-to-counselor ratio is twice the recommended ratio — 530 to 1.<sup>58</sup> Latino students are concentrated in these school districts. These 100 districts enroll 40 percent of the K–12 Latino student population and about 22 percent of the entire K–12 student population.<sup>59</sup> These high student-to-counselor ratios for Latino students limit the engagement of counselors with Latino students and can thus have a negative effect on a student’s preparation, informational knowledge and educational outcomes. According to a study conducted by CSCORE, favorable student-to-counselor ratios were linked to improved attendance rates, increased completion rates in Perkins programs and decreased discipline incident rates.<sup>60</sup>

## **Counselors at low-income schools with high concentrations of Latino students spend limited time on college preparation.**

Almost half of all Latino students enrolled in K–12 education are enrolled in schools with high concentrations of low-income students. In 2008–2009, 45 percent of Hispanic students were enrolled in schools where more than 75 percent of the students were eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program.<sup>61</sup> School data on student participation in the free and reduced-price lunch program are a proxy for determining the concentration of low-income students in a school.



According to the College Board, in low-income communities and in schools that enroll low-income students, school counselors spend a significant time addressing personal and social issues, including mental health services.<sup>62</sup> Counselors also spend a significant amount of time on scheduling, testing, discipline, recess duty and substitute teaching.<sup>63</sup> As a result, Latino students in schools with a high enrollment of low-income students may not receive counseling services about college opportunities, the steps necessary to prepare academically and financially for college.

### **Counselors serving many Latino students may focus on increasing academic achievement over college preparation.**

Academic achievement is determined by courses completed and grades earned. College planning includes academic achievement, but it also includes attainment of other information and skills often provided by school counselors about college options. For example, according to the federal government's *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, a high school counselor "advises students regarding college majors, admission requirements, entrance exams, financial aid or technical schools, and apprenticeship programs."<sup>64</sup>

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) research, at public high schools with a 75 percent or more majority of minority students, counselors emphasized programs that helped students with their academic achievement in high school (51 percent) rather than helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary schooling (18 percent).<sup>65</sup> Latinos in K–12 education are highly concentrated in majority–minority schools.<sup>66</sup> These schools enroll a majority of students from minority racial/ethnic groups. These students are less likely to receive counseling that promotes college aspirations, academic preparation and college readiness, and assistance in financial aid and admission processes.

### **Latino students may lack “college knowledge” and look to counselors for guidance.**

It is important for school counselors to keep up to date on new trends and information through professional development in order to ensure they are providing accurate information to students and guiding students in a manner that is culturally relevant and constructive. According to a report by the Education Commission of the States, although there are many reasons why students who plan to attend college fail to do so, one primary reason is lack of “college knowledge.” College knowledge refers to information on colleges and universities, academic preparation, application and financial aid processes, and SAT<sup>®</sup>/ACT exams.<sup>67</sup> Studies have shown that Latino students and their families have limited knowledge of college information.<sup>68</sup>

For example, in a study by *Excelencia* in Education, several institutions in South Texas were working with middle, high school and college counselors to address the limited knowledge that many Latino students had about their financial aid options.<sup>69</sup> Many did not consider student loans to be financial aid, and they did not know how to navigate the financial aid process or to identify multiple information sources without institutional guidance. It can be hard for Latino students and their families to navigate the higher education system when many of these students are the first in their families to attend college.

# State Policy Approaches



**\$**  
**Low Cost**

**Offer an elective course for middle school students on how to prepare for, apply to, select and pay for college.**

The sooner Latino students learn about their college options, the more likely they are to be appropriately prepared. There should be a widespread offering of a middle school elective course that provides college information going beyond the traditional two-hour evening workshop, which is targeted to school districts with a high enrollment of Latino and other low-income and first-generation potential college-goers, as well as schools with low Academic Performance Index (API) rankings. For example, CollegeEd® is a college planning and career exploration program for middle and high school students by the College Board. The program is designed to help students in grades 7–12 develop their capacity to succeed in college and in life.



**\$\$**  
**Medium Cost**

**Fund programs that ensure counselors spend time on college-preparation activities.**

In **Colorado**, the School Counselors Corps Grant program provides grants to schools with a high dropout rate or a high percentage of students who are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program to increase the number of school counselors in their institutions. Since Latinos are disproportionately enrolled in such schools, this effort can serve these students. Each grant recipient must annually report to the state department of education information indicating an increase in the level of postsecondary preparation services provided, such as the use of individual career and academic plans or enrollment in precollegiate preparation programs or postsecondary or vocational preparation programs. With the assistance of this grant, 90 schools have provided additional services to over 82,000 students of whom more than 38,000 students (46 percent) are economically disadvantaged.<sup>70</sup>

### Provide funding for the professional development of school counselors.

With funds received from the Race to the Top grant from the U.S. Department of Education, **Massachusetts** will expand its comprehensive school counseling program. This expansion will provide funding for the professional development of school counselors and school administrators so they are adequately trained. This investment in professional development will include counselors and administrators in high-need areas and can expand their content area knowledge to assist students in making postsecondary choices and navigating the college admission and financial aid process.

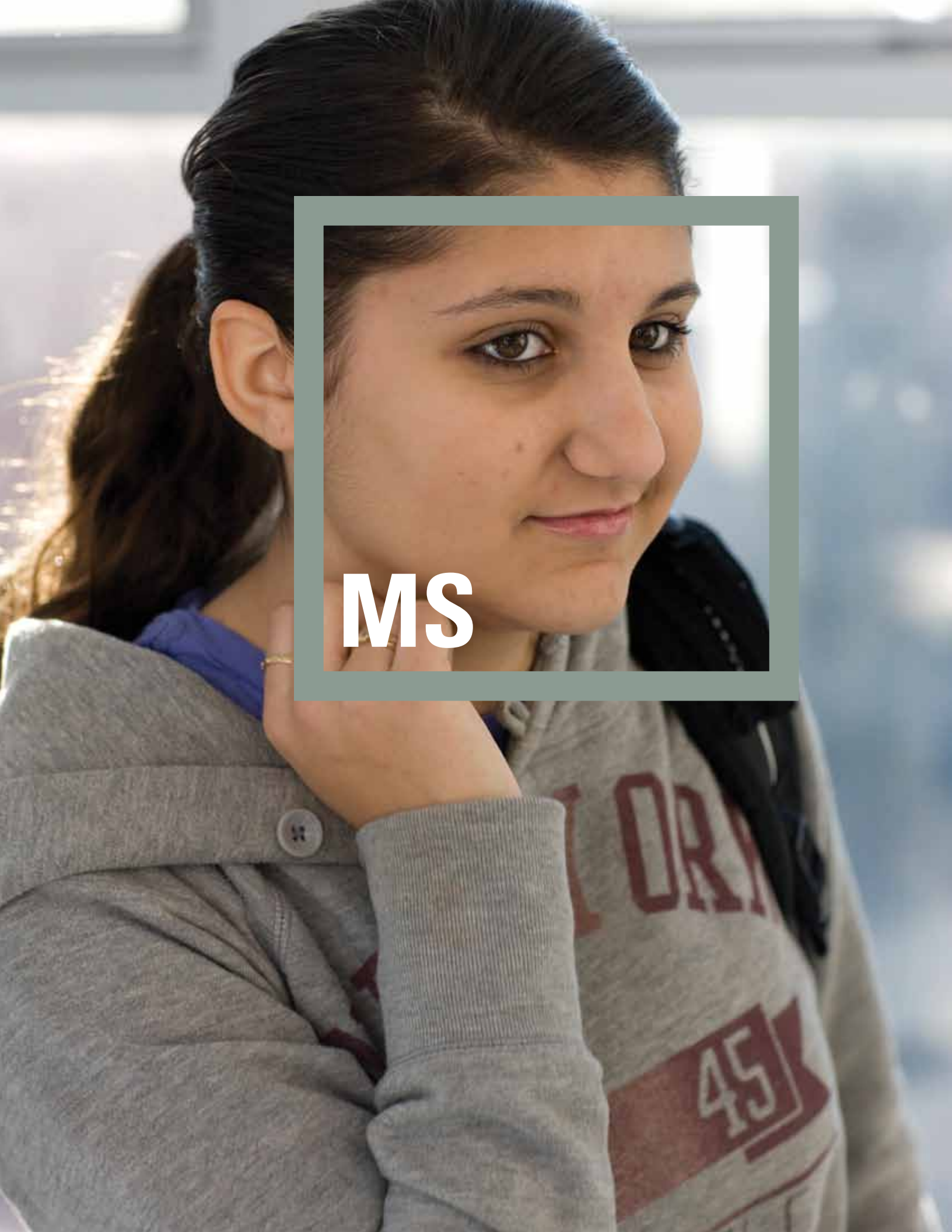


### Provide funding to enable schools to increase the number of counselors.

State policymakers could look to federal policy to guide them in developing a program that supports counseling programs in school districts and increases the number of trained school counselors. For example, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (as amended, Title V, Part D, Subpart 2, Section 5421) provides a three-year grant to school districts to “establish or expand elementary and secondary school counseling programs.”

### Consider adopting policies that allow for one-on-one counseling.

The Schools Curriculum: Opportunities for Pupils (Chapter 732, Statutes of 2007) is a law in **California** that reforms middle and high school counseling programs to ensure that students receive individualized review of their career goals, and that they are informed not only about high school graduation requirements, but also of college eligibility requirements and career technical opportunities in their schools.



**MS**

# Take Action

- 1** Determine the counselor-to-student ratio for students in the state overall, and compare this with schools or districts with high concentrations of enrolled Latino students.
- 2** Conduct a survey to determine the priority areas in school districts where counselors are serving large concentrations of Latino students. Are these aligned with college-preparation needs?
- 3** Encourage school districts in the state to adopt an optional curriculum offered in middle schools to prepare and pay for college.
- 4** Convene a group of stakeholders (including counselors, school board members, parents and students) to bring attention to the important role of counselors, identify the needs of Latino students in the community, and develop a specific strategy to improve college and career counseling at districts with large Latino student enrollment.
- 5** Convene higher education representatives preparing school counselors for the state and encourage the creation of course work to increase the number of school counselors who are bilingual (Spanish/English).

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Recommendation **Three**

# Dropout Prevention & Recovery

**TRES**

## One

Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families

## Two

Improve middle and high school college and career counseling

## Three

Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs

## Four

Align the K–12 education system with international standards and college admission expectations

## Five

Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention

## Six

Clarify and simplify the admission process

## Seven

Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent

## Eight

Keep college affordable

## Nine

Dramatically increase college completion rates

## Ten

Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs

## Background

Latino education is at a crisis point in the United States. Although Latinos are the fastest-growing demographic group in the country, Latino high school and college graduation rates are among the lowest of all racial and ethnic groups. In addition, high-school-age Latinos who are also English language learners face enormous challenges in attempting to learn complex material while at the same time acquiring English language skills at high levels. For immigrant Latinos with low levels of Spanish literacy and periods of interrupted education, the prospects for high school graduation become quite bleak. The consequences of leaving high school without graduating have been well documented: lower lifetime earnings and higher unemployment.<sup>71</sup>

Hispanic status<sup>72</sup> dropout remained unchanged from 1997 (25 percent) to 2007 (21 percent), and remained significantly higher than dropout rates for whites (from 8 percent in 1997 to 5 percent in 2007) and African Americans (from 13 percent in 1997 to 8 percent in 2007).<sup>73</sup> In 2008, the graduation rate for Latinos was 63.5 percent, compared to 81.0 percent for whites and 61.5 percent for African Americans.<sup>74</sup>

While dropout prevention is important for Latinos, ensuring that they graduate ready for college is critical. For 2008, the college participation rate of Latinos was 26 percent, compared to whites (44 percent) and African Americans (32 percent).<sup>75</sup>

# What Legislators Need to Know

Addressing the Latino dropout crisis requires legislators to understand the extent of the problem and its impact on the state's economy. Legislators should seek the answers to the following questions:

- 
- What is the Latino graduation rate for the state? What is the ELL graduation rate for the state?
- 
- What is the Latino graduation rate for each school district in the state? Do school districts also calculate what their graduation rate is for other subgroups, such as ELLs?
- 
- What programs are in place to prevent Latinos from dropping out?
- 
- What options are available for Latino dropouts to reenter high school? How many reenroll and graduate?
- 
- What percentage of Latino high school graduates go on to college? What percentage of those students go to community colleges? To four-year institutions?
- 
- How many of those who do enroll in institutions of higher education graduate within four years? Within six years?

# Research

## Latinos face various factors that can lead to dropping out.

Recent research<sup>76</sup> has identified several factors that lead to dropping out:

- Poor grades in core content classes
- Poor school attendance
- Grade retention
- Disengagement in class

Of particular concern for Latinos is grade retention, as Latinos are more likely to be retained than white students, even starting in the first grade.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, this risk factor is already present at the very beginning of the educational life of Latinos.

Other risk factors are created by schools that are unwelcoming or that lack the ability to provide for the needs of Latino students. A recent study<sup>78</sup> of high school Latinas<sup>79</sup> demonstrates the daunting challenges they face in graduating from high school, despite having high aspirations for themselves. Although 98 percent indicate they wish to graduate from high school (and 80 percent from college), only 41 percent graduate on time with a standard diploma. Among the barriers identified to Latina high school graduation were:

- Poverty
- Immigration status
- Limited English language proficiency
- Discrimination based on gender and ethnicity
- High rates of teen pregnancy
- Less involvement in school activities
- Caretaking responsibilities at home

Furthermore, Latinas identified school and program staff as the source of ethnic and gender discrimination. Teacher perception has a significant impact on Latino student achievement. Teachers may approach Latino students' lack of academic achievement by either blaming the students or their families or by excusing them for factors outside the school, such as high poverty or limited English proficiency.<sup>80</sup>

## What works in preventing Latino dropouts.

Strengthening educators' ability to use their student and community cultures as an asset is important in keeping Latinos engaged in schools.<sup>81</sup> Teachers who lack understanding of Latino culture may not understand the complexity of issues faced by Latino students, nor value the many assets they bring to schools.

Latinos may need access to alternative programs so that they do not drop out. Creating multiple pathways to high school graduation — for students who are older and under credited, truant, or disconnected from school — are promising practices for increasing graduation rates.<sup>82</sup> Through the use of these programs, even older Latinos with interrupted schooling are able to graduate with a high school diploma.

Given the connection between the dropouts and truancy, dropout prevention programs need to address the issues of truancy in Latinos. For Latinos who are ELLs, the lack of English proficiency is often a cause of truancy and dropout if academic programs do not provide the appropriate rigor and supports needed to engage all students.<sup>83</sup>

Programs that focus on parent engagement can ensure that parents understand how to support their children through high school. For example, the National Council of La Raza's Padres Comprometidos helps schools build relationships with Latino parents by providing a nine-week course that focuses on helping parents understand schools and how to communicate with teachers and administrators, how to understand adolescents, how to model positive behaviors at home, and how to help their children prepare for college.<sup>84</sup>

Finally, for undocumented youth, the promise of college affordability appears to be a positive factor in high school graduation. As Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated recently, "Right now, 13 states offer in-state tuition for undocumented students. In these states that offer a promise of low-cost tuition, the high school dropout rate for noncitizen Latinos has fallen by 14 percent."<sup>85</sup>

### **Special considerations must be made for Latinos who are English language learners.**

Programs designed to prevent Latino dropouts should take into consideration the needs of those students who are also ELLs. These students need to accomplish two interrelated tasks simultaneously: acquire academic English language skills while they learn secondary academic content. Although the tendency of educators is to lower expectations for these students, they need exactly the opposite: Mastery of rigorous secondary materials is the best predictor of college success.<sup>86</sup>

ELLs require scaffolding of lessons to make curriculum and content comprehensible. Effective instruction uses the experiential background of students as a “point of departure and an anchor in the exploration of new ideas.”<sup>87</sup> The Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) training for teachers of ELLs<sup>88</sup> uses five principles that should be followed when designing learning activities for ELLs:

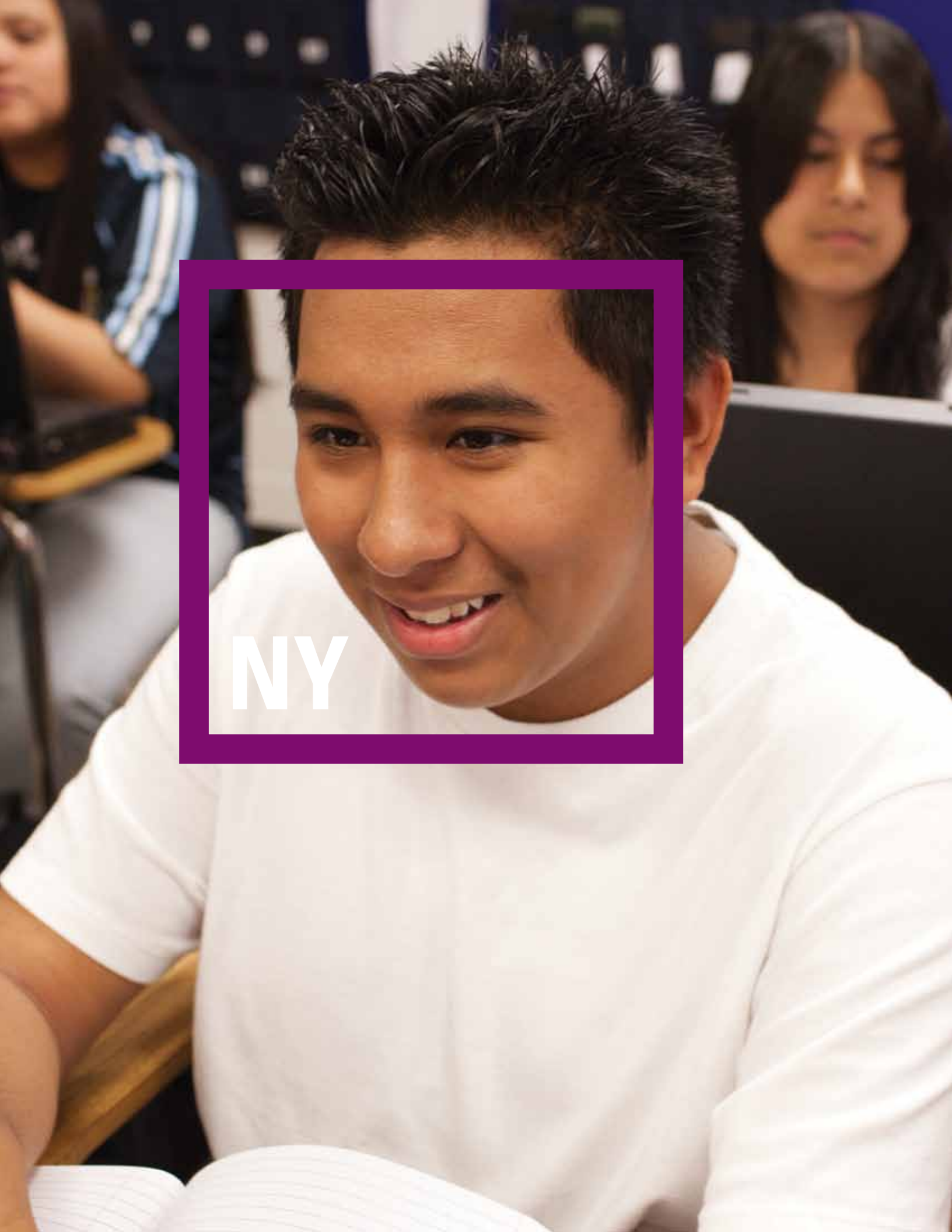
- Sustain academic rigor
- Hold high expectations
- Engage students in quality interactions
- Sustain a language focus
- Develop quality curriculum

### **Effective implementation of college- and career-readiness standards is necessary to improve Latino student success.**

In addition to establishing effective dropout prevention programs, states need to adopt and implement rigorous college- and career-readiness standards to ensure that Latinos are prepared for postsecondary education or jobs. A recent study by the College Board showed that Latinos made up 15 percent of SAT test-takers, as compared to 53 percent white and 13 percent African American test-takers. Substantial increases in SAT test-takers occurred between 2007 and 2011 for all ethnic and racial groups, but the largest increases in test-takers were by Latinos (45 percent) and African American (29 percent).<sup>89</sup> Data from the College Board also demonstrate increases in Latino test-takers between 2001 and 2011 (from 8 percent to 15 percent of all test-takers).<sup>90</sup>

An example of a successful national program to develop college and career readiness in Latino youth is the NCLR Escalera Program: Taking Steps to Success<sup>91</sup> that works with young Latinos who may need additional supports to graduate from high school. Students in the program participate in college- and career-exploration activities that have proven effective in increasing high school graduation and transition to postsecondary education. Ninety-five percent of eligible students from the 2009 cohort enrolled in college; in addition, 99 percent of the 2008 cohort stayed in college after the critical first year.

Finally, districts that have focused on developing a college-going culture for Latinos have begun to demonstrate excellent results. Jobs for the Future recently published a report on the impact of an early college program implemented by the Hidalgo Independent School District in Texas.<sup>92</sup> The demographics of this district of 3,500 students include 99.5 percent Hispanic and 89 percent economically disadvantaged. Through a partnership with a local university, the district decided in 2005 to ensure that all students earned college credits while still in high school. In 2008, the district had a nearly 100 percent high school completion rate, and 94 percent of the district's 2008 class took the SAT or the ACT.



NY



# State Policy Approaches

Over the years, policy and programmatic innovations have showed that no single system can adequately address the dropout problem; Latino youth need a wide range of interventions delivered by a variety of youth-serving institutions and systems. States should build upon the current knowledge and understanding of how to engage and serve disconnected youth on a local level. We have developed the following recommendations to ensure that disconnected youth gain the skills they need to succeed.



## **Encourage collaboration and partnerships among local communities and youth-serving programs and institutions.**

Establishing funding that rewards the development of a dropout recovery system that provides seamless wraparound services for the most at-risk populations will encourage collaboration between youth development stakeholders. This partnership is essential for community-based organizations that serve disconnected and high-risk Hispanic youth who need the wraparound services.

## **Develop strategies that help Latino families become partners in dropout recovery programs.**

Research<sup>93</sup> has demonstrated that disconnected youth fare better when family support is present. Including parents and the family in each step of the participant's progress can significantly support the youth's educational and professional endeavors.

## **Fund youth programs and initiatives that include case management as a core component.**

Case management is an essential yet underfunded component of disconnected youth programs. Across the board, youth participants cited their relationships with their case managers as integral to their participation in the program; it is imperative to fully invest in the development of effective and culturally competent case managers.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, funding for disconnected youth programs should take into account the costs that community-based organizations incur for maintaining appropriate staff-to-youth ratios and training and developing skilled case managers, and for the associated costs of providing high-quality case management services.

### **Establish year-round programs for disconnected Latino youth.**

Invest in the development and implementation of programs that offer services to disconnected youth for longer program cycles, and establish qualitative measures of success in addition to quantitative outcomes.

### **Support preventative strategies and implement competency-based approaches.**

Through initiatives such as online classes, credit recovery and dual-enrollment opportunities, dropouts and students at high risk of dropping out can become reengaged in school. Such programs will allow dropouts to obtain a high school diploma in order to achieve specific learning objectives in collaboration with adult education programs, schools or community-based organizations.<sup>95</sup>

### **Identify successful credit recovery programs and maintain high expectations for all students.**

Credit recovery programs should not create lower standards or expectations for students who have left the education system for a variety of reasons. It is critical to ensure that all students, especially those who are historically underserved, are receiving the same high quality education as their peers.

### **Provide students access to support, such as expanded learning opportunities, that removes barriers to learning and engages them in learning.**

Research has shown that expanded learning opportunities that are strategically designed and targeted to increase achievement, improve student engagement, and enhance knowledge and skill development are important community-based solutions that can equalize educational opportunities, curb dropout rates, and prepare all students for college and careers.<sup>96</sup> It is critical for states to provide technical assistance to programs to enable other schools to maintain and replicate successful programs.

### **Direct funding to mentoring activities and for youth participation in alternative education programs.<sup>97</sup>**

Providing Latino students with access to good role models as well as support for nontraditional school models can help them meet their goals for higher education. Fostering the positive growth of Latino youth is vital to the economic health of local communities and our nation as a whole.



**Medium Cost**

## **Implement a culturally and linguistically appropriate Response to Intervention (RTI) system.**

An effective RTI model requires collaboration among all educators (e.g., speech and language therapists, school psychologists, counselors, English as second language/bilingual specialists) that would provide increased opportunities for all stakeholders to work together on how to best meet the needs of students. Such systems would identify a student who is struggling and allow appropriate supports to be implemented early in the student's academic career.<sup>98</sup>



## **Establish early warning systems that are inclusive of ELL students.**

Early warning systems identify students at highest risk for dropping out and then target resources to keep them in school. An early warning system that uses indicators based on readily accessible data can predict, during the students' first year in high school, whether the students are on the right path toward eventual graduation.<sup>99</sup> Effective implementation of early warning systems guards against overidentification of ELL students. Overidentification or inappropriate identification for special services can lead to students receiving the wrong kind of intervention, losing interest and dropping out. Early warning systems should accurately identify students who need specific, additional help to ensure that the students who need it the most get appropriate help.

## **Develop and share student data as part of a statewide longitudinal data system with key stakeholders.**

Comprehensive data systems allow states, districts, schools and teachers to make data-driven decisions to improve student learning, as well as facilitate research to increase student achievement and close achievement gaps. Sharing state longitudinal student data with community partners can further improve student learning outside of the traditional school day. Disseminating key student information to relevant partners can ensure that student needs are being addressed in multiple settings.

## **Enact bills that allow immigrant students to pay in-state tuition.**

Making hard-working students pay out-of-state tuition creates an additional barrier for immigrant students to attend college. Without the enactment of state and federal laws, many of these students who were brought to the United States as children, having lived and studied in the U.S. for the majority of their lives, will continue to have barriers in seeking higher education and employment upon their graduation.

# Promising Practices

As too many students, particularly low-income students of color, leave the public school system without the knowledge and skills demanded by higher education and the globalized workforce, it becomes increasingly critical to provide students with reentry and credit recovery programs where they can gain the skills they need to succeed. The following promising programs highlight some of the above recommendations.

**New York** and **Oregon** have implemented preventative strategies through initiatives such as online classes, credit recovery and dual-enrollment opportunities. New York has also established the Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education in partnership with the City University of New York (CUNY), which prepares low-income and students of color for college through partnerships and committed staff. The vast majority of Gateway participants (97 percent) attend college and graduate within five years of enrollment (80 percent).<sup>100</sup>

**Indiana** and **Georgia** provide further funding for youth participating in alternative education programs.<sup>101</sup> Alternative education is designed to meet the needs of at-risk students who are not succeeding in the traditional setting. Students in alternative education programs are provided a variety of support services and options that can lead to graduation. These services may require additional state funding to ensure quality implementation.

**Vermont** has implemented a competency-based approach to allow dropouts to obtain a high school diploma by achieving specific learning objectives in collaboration with adult education programs, schools or community-based organizations.<sup>102</sup>

**California**, as well as **Texas, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Utah, Washington** and **Wisconsin**,<sup>103</sup> have enacted state laws that allow immigrant students to attend public colleges and universities with in-state tuition (known as AB540 in California). **Connecticut**<sup>104</sup> and **Maryland** are the most recent states that passed such laws, but in Maryland the law is undergoing scrutiny.<sup>105</sup> State laws like these permit qualified immigrant students to attend college at a more affordable fee.

Additionally of the above listed states, only two, **New Mexico** and **Texas**, allow eligible undocumented immigrants to also participate in its state financial aid programs.<sup>106</sup>

In order to curb college dropout rates, states such as **Indiana, Ohio** and **Tennessee** have changed their higher education funding to award colleges based on degree attainment, rather than on enrollment.<sup>107</sup>

In **Colorado**, Denver's response to intervention (RTI) developed a self-assessment tool that is intended to assist schools/districts wanting to determine "next steps" toward implementation of a multitiered RTI approach for meeting the learning needs of ALL students. The tools provide the means to reflect on policies and practices from the classroom level, to the school district, to the state level in order to continually improve outcomes for students. These tools are intended to be used statewide and provide needed support in a continuous improvement cycle.

# Take Action

- 1 Engage local community and parents in creating a college-going culture.**
- 2 Encourage collaboration and partnerships among local communities and youth-serving programs and institutions.**
- 3 Provide students access to support, such as expanded learning opportunities, that removes barriers to learning and engages them in learning.**
- 4 Identify successful credit recovery programs and maintain high expectations for all students.**
- 5 Track student data as part of a longitudinal data system.**
- 6 Establish early warning systems that are inclusive of ELL students.**

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Recommendation **Four**

# Standards & Alignment

**CUATRO**

## One

Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families

## Two

Improve middle and high school college and career counseling

## Three

Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs

## Four

Align the K–12 education system with international standards and college admission expectations

## Five

Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention

## Six

Clarify and simplify the admission process

## Seven

Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent

## Eight

Keep college affordable

## Nine

Dramatically increase college completion rates

## Ten

Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs

## Background

Although the United States has fallen behind in academic performance in comparison to other nations, the academic achievement of Latinos<sup>108</sup> has lagged even further. Significant gaps remain when comparing Latinos to other racial and ethnic groups on a variety of measures of academic achievement.<sup>109</sup> The academic success of Latinos and English language learners is critical to the strength of the U.S. economy because these students represent a large and growing share of the U.S. student population and the future workforce. For example, Latinos account for more than half of the nation's growth since 2000<sup>110</sup> and currently represent 20 percent of public school enrollment, up from 11 percent in 1986.<sup>111</sup> In addition, ELLs are the fastest growing segment of the school-age population. While ELLs constitute more than 10 percent of the nation's total public school population, ELL student enrollment has increased at nearly seven times the rate of total student enrollment.<sup>112</sup>

Despite the great need to serve this large and growing population of students, key elements of the education system are not serving them well (i.e., lack of access to rigorous curricula, appropriate assessments and effective parent engagement). Because academic standards are the backbone of the entire education system, raising standards to ensure college and career readiness is a critical step to ensuring that all students receive a high quality education. The state-led voluntary effort to establish a set of higher and internationally benchmarked academic standards for English language arts and mathematics, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative, presents an opportunity to improve the educational elements necessary to realize successful Latino student outcomes.

The alignment of educational systems is multifaceted, but it could especially benefit Latinos at several junctures where the performance of these students tends to falter. These junctures include: access to quality preschools, readiness for literacy and mathematics, high school graduation, and access to postsecondary education. In addition, the alignment of high-quality state assessments to high content standards is critical in measuring the true academic achievement of ELLs.

# What Legislators Need to Know

As states proceed in the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, or work to raise their own standards, in order to ensure effective alignment of their state educational systems, legislators must have answers to the following questions:

- What is the Latino four-year graduation rate for the state? What percentage of Latino graduates are college and career ready, as measured by participation in the SAT, ACT, AP®, IB and NAEP?
- With the implementation of CCSS or higher state standards that lead to college and career readiness, what is being done to ensure that all students, including ELLs and students with special needs, are being taught to the same high-quality standards?
- What, if any, additional services and supports will be put in place for ELLs to meet those expectations?
- Are teachers prepared to teach all students, including ELLs and students with significant delays in academic skills, to the same high standards?
- Does the state's data system support P–20 alignment?
- Do current state assessments accurately measure the knowledge and skills of ELLs?
- Are the content standards, curriculum and assessments at each level going to prepare and adequately assess all students?
- How many Latinos start college in two-year institutions? What percentage of these students later enroll in four-year institutions and graduate?
- How many Latinos begin college at a four-year institution?
- Are state standards available in other languages? Has the state involved Latino parents in the adoption of the CCSS and in developing and understanding the plan for implementation?
- Will the state's English language proficiency (ELP) standards be aligned to CCSS's English language arts standards to ensure that ELLs are still learning academic content while building their English language skills?

# Research

## **Effective implementation of college- and career-ready standards ensures that all students are being taught to the same high standard.**

States have increasingly become aware of the need for high academic standards if they are to maintain a competitive workforce. The recent move toward the adoption of the CCSS in most states results in more than 80 percent of students in the U.S. focused on the same college- and career-readiness standards.<sup>113</sup> A recent study by ACT shows that the CCSS are internationally competitive and can lead to high school graduates ready for postsecondary education or training.<sup>114</sup> These findings make it imperative for states to guarantee that all students, including Latinos, can reach these high standards.

Because of the importance of high standards to the Latino community, the National Council of La Raza has developed a toolkit to help these communities advocate for the effective implementation of the CCSS “in a way that truly improves education for Latino students.”<sup>115</sup> The toolkit identifies four educational elements that policymakers must address as they relate to Latino achievement:

- Effective, well-trained teachers who are able to integrate the acquisition of academic English language skills while delivering instruction on complex content.
- Rigorous curricula designed to meet college- and career-readiness standards.
- Assessments that accurately measure student achievement.
- Effective family and community engagement strategies.

The toolkit specifically addresses the need for Latino family and community engagement in the implementation of the CCSS. Parents must have access to standards written in a manner comprehensible to them (e.g., translated into Spanish). If Latino parents understand the standards, they can become advocates for them, as well as hold schools accountable for their children’s mastery of the standards. NCLR’s *Padres Comprometidos*, a parent engagement curriculum, includes sample standards for different grade levels. The curriculum also addresses the issue of achievement gaps among different subgroups and equips parents to engage school staff in discussions of their own children’s performance on statewide assessments.<sup>116</sup>

### **Alignment of state systems benefits all students.**

The National Governors Association (NGA)<sup>117</sup> has advocated for the creation of aligned educational systems from preschool to college (P–16).<sup>118</sup> The NGA's policy principles advocate P–16 alignment starting at the federal level through the amendments of the major education laws. The role of P–16/20<sup>119</sup> councils varies across the country in strength and capacity.<sup>120</sup> Although the majority of states have P–16 systems, NCLR supports the expansion to P–20 for alignment with graduate studies and the workforce. Among the proposals are the alignment of P–16 accountability and the creation of data systems that would support individual student tracking. These proposals could be especially beneficial to Latino students, as states could ensure that they are provided access and equity in educational programs from preschool through college. Several states have already begun to align their P–16 systems with a particular focus on ELLs. Florida, California, Texas and New York have implemented strategies designed to ensure that data are collected on the education achievement of ELLs at all grade levels and that districts are provided support to improve instructional practices for these students.<sup>121</sup>

Compared to other racial and ethnic groups, Latinos are experiencing the fastest growth in college enrollment.<sup>122</sup> However, more than any other group, they access postsecondary education through community colleges.<sup>123</sup> And, nearly half of Latinos in community colleges do not transfer to a four-year institution.<sup>124</sup> Aligned educational systems would support continued access to community colleges with a focus on helping Latinos continue on to four-year institutions.

Adequately meeting the needs of ELLs requires that assessments are aligned with state content standards and structured to determine the true level of content mastery of ELLs — rather than their knowledge of the English language, especially at the high school level. These assessments can be administered in native language or through the use of accommodations. The two new assessment consortia, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, are designing assessments aligned to the CCSS and are committed to ensuring accessible assessments.

# State Policy Approaches

As states implement the CCSS initiative, policymakers must ensure that all students are provided the educational support and resources necessary to meet the new higher standards. Policymakers must adopt the following recommendations so that the initiative fulfills its promise to improve education for Latino and ELL students.



## **Implement effective parent and community engagement strategies.**

Schools serving low-income students of color often do not have established effective, ongoing communication and engagement with parents. Federal law requires school districts to disseminate critical information to parents, including school and student performance data. However, parents' understanding of this data, especially parents of ELLs, is often limited by factors that include language barriers and overly complicated reporting formats. Consequently, parents do not have the requisite information needed to hold their schools accountable for providing high-quality instruction. The adoption and implementation of CCSS presents an opportunity to involve all interested stakeholders, including parents and community members. Because Latino students are concentrated in low-performing schools that will be required to raise standards, states and districts should provide information to parents and communities concerning the implications of higher standards in a language and format they understand, and that will encourage their involvement and support.

## **Identify any assessment accommodations in state plans that are offered to ELLs, including evidence of their effectiveness in yielding valid results for ELLs.**

The most frequently used accommodations by states are not necessarily those that have been found to be the most effective in validly reducing the testing gap between ELLs and non-ELLs. In many states, the same accommodations are used in assessing both ELLs and students with disabilities, notwithstanding the differences in these populations. States should both ensure and demonstrate that the accommodations used for ELLs and students with disabilities are appropriate for each population.

### **Ensure that representatives on state assessment committees are representative of the student population.**

The inclusion of Latino experts, researchers and providers on assessment committees helps to ensure that best practices for Latino students and families are being implemented.



### **Establish a P–20 council or make other efforts to align educational goals from preschool to graduate level if one does not already exist.**

Developing a team of individuals from the community — including business leaders, teachers, union leaders, school faculty and boards, parents, representatives from institutions of higher education, and representatives of state education and workforce agencies — can ensure that all stakeholders are working to improve education from birth to adulthood, to maximize students' educational attainment, opportunities for success in the workforce and contributions to their local communities.

### **Provide guidance to districts and schools regarding appropriate assessment accommodation practices.**

Teachers and administrators do not currently receive adequate guidance and preparation in the administration of accommodations to ELLs and students with disabilities. In addition, some research indicates that accommodations are the most effective when they have been integrated into daily classroom instruction, suggesting that training teachers in how to best incorporate such accommodations into their pedagogy is critical.

### **Require the inclusion of accommodations in the state plan for professional development.**

This provision ensures that teachers in states that use accommodations as part of their assessment system will be prepared to adjust their instruction accordingly and use accommodations appropriately.



### **Ensure alignment of curricula with standards and assessments.**

High poverty and minority schools are less likely to offer college-preparatory courses. Research demonstrates a strong correlation between taking higher-level courses in high school and achieving success in college.<sup>125</sup> Curriculum, instructional materials and tests used to measure student performance must be aligned with the Common Core State Standards to ensure that students are not only taught to higher expectations, but also appropriately assessed for their learning. Alignment and proper assessment are especially important for ELLs to ensure that they are learning both academic content and language at the same time.

### **Develop and implement valid and reliable assessments for all students.**

Most tests that assess students' knowledge of content are designed with the assumption that the test-taker is a native English speaker, and many test administrators do not provide statistically sound and legally allowable accommodations for these students. Policymakers should ensure that academic assessments appropriately measure all students' acquisition of rigorous academic content. The use of proper assessment accommodations, such as simplified language, for ELLs must be in place, and teachers administering tests must have adequate training in how to use such accommodations.

### **Move toward an assessment and accountability system that weighs the English language proficiency and academic assessments for ELLs.**

For accountability purposes, both the language proficiency assessment and the academic assessments should be taken into consideration and weighed according to each student's level of language proficiency. For ELLs at the beginning levels of language proficiency, more weight should be given to language proficiency assessment results. As a learner becomes more proficient in English, gradually more weight can be given to the academic content assessment results. Although many states and districts currently do not have the data capacity to feasibly carry out this recommendation, it is possible with support from the U.S. Department of Education, which will provide resources and technical assistance to help states and districts develop their data systems.





FL

# Promising Practices

The current climate in implementing the CCSS presents an opportunity to involve all stakeholders in the discussion around aligning state standards with assessments and the professional development of teachers. The following promising programs highlight some of the above recommendations.

In **Florida**, the number of ELLs in public schools has increased by 58 percent and comprises 8.7 percent of the K–12 student population.<sup>126</sup> This growth drove state leaders to develop a student indicator and a reporting system that provides every enrolled student in a Florida school a unique identifying number that follows the student from pre-K (or time of entry) through grade 20 of the public education system. They also collect specific ELL demographic data that include information such as the date the student entered the United States (if applicable), years in U.S. schools, prior school, length of continuous enrollment, citizenship status, native language spoken and primary language spoken at home. Florida also collects specific ELL program service data for ELLs, including basis and date of entry, exit, post reclassification follow-ups, and home language survey and instructional strategy.

**California's** P–16 Council, along with the California Department of Education, launched Achieving Success for All Students, a multiagency initiative focused on closing the achievement gap between recognized subgroups in the state and federal accountability systems. As part of this initiative, the P–16 Council developed recommendations on how to address the gap between ELLs and non-ELLs. The development of P–16 Councils allows states to address the unique needs of subgroups in their state.

**Rhode Island's** Partnerships for Success provides strategic partnerships between the state's K–12 schools and institutions of higher education.<sup>127</sup> The key use of partnerships in aligning the P–16 system is part of the state's effort to raise the levels of academic achievement, ensure college and work readiness, and expand civic engagement opportunities for students.

**Arizona's** P–20 Council has been repurposed to now measure and track progress of established performance goals and outcome expectations for preschools, K–12 schools, community colleges and universities.<sup>128</sup> The process of utilizing the Governor's P–20 Coordinating Council, with input and support across the state from educators, business leaders and community organizations, served as a statewide planning process for the transformation of Arizona's education system to increase student achievement across all grade spans.

**Colorado** made a step forward in serving ELLs by adopting the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards as the Colorado English language proficiency (ELP) standards.<sup>129</sup> Overall, the standards center on the English language needed and used by ELLs to succeed in school. These standards also guide all educators who teach ELLs and helps students access grade-level academic content while learning English. Prior to adopting these standards, Colorado did not previously include information, ideas and concepts of math, science and social studies in their ELP standards.

Both state assessment consortia, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), are taking into consideration the needs of ELLs by establishing technical advisory committees that will include experts on the assessment of ELLs to ensure that access and accommodations for this group of students are met.<sup>130</sup>

# Take Action

- 1** Engage community representatives from all different levels, including parents, teachers and institutions of higher education, to ensure proper implementation of college- and career-ready standards.
- 2** Research best practices from states with similar student body demographics.
- 3** Develop and align professional development with state standards and assessments.
- 4** Establish a P-20 Council or other efforts to align educational goals from preschool to graduate level if one does not already exist.
- 5** Fund and support vertical alignment efforts of curriculum and assessments to ensure that students are being taught to the same high standard, regardless of their income level or race/ethnicity.

## Notes

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Recommendation **Five**

# **Educator Quality**

**CINCO**

## One

Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families

## Two

Improve middle and high school college and career counseling

## Three

Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs

## Four

Align the K–12 education system with international standards and college admission expectations

## Five

Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention

## Six

Clarify and simplify the admission process

## Seven

Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent

## Eight

Keep college affordable

## Nine

Dramatically increase college completion rates

## Ten

Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs

## Background

Several factors impact the achievement of Latino children, none more than having access to effective teachers. In fact, high-quality teachers are the single most important factor influencing student academic outcomes, including graduation.<sup>131</sup> Yet research shows that the students most likely to benefit from dedicated and effective teachers are not being taught by effective teachers.<sup>132</sup> These are the same students who have traditionally been underserved by the system and who are the most dependent on our public schools for their education.

Low-income, low-performing students and students of color are far more likely than other students to have inexperienced, uncertified, poorly educated, out-of-field and under-performing teachers.<sup>133</sup> New teachers with less than two years of experience and out-of-field teachers are most likely to teach in the low-income and high-minority schools,<sup>134</sup> whereas highly effective teachers are more likely to be teaching in more affluent schools and schools with smaller populations of students of color.<sup>135</sup> Although experience teaching in a classroom may not be the only factor influencing teaching effectiveness,<sup>136</sup> the qualities that create strong educators (including content knowledge, enthusiasm for teaching and a commitment to the teaching profession) should be equitably present in all schools.



To adequately address the needs of Latino children, it is critical to increase the pool of effective teachers, as well as ensure that the pool of effective teachers better reflects the student populations it is serving. The evolving demographics of public schools require a change in thinking about the knowledge and experience necessary to become an effective teacher. Research shows that students have a better connection with teachers who understand their cultures, know how to address their unique needs, and are able to provide them with tools that can help them focus and engage in school.<sup>137</sup>

Although the numbers of Latino children in U.S. schools has exponentially increased,<sup>138</sup> the number of Latino educators only increased by 4 percent in the 20-year span between 1987-88 and 2007-08.<sup>139</sup> Addressing the lack of Latinos in the teaching workforce will require increasing support in the teaching pipeline to ensure that the teaching workforce better reflects the student populations it is serving. Teachers who are able to relate to their students or who have familiarity with the needs and strengths of a community are better positioned to build important relationships with students and their families. Latinos are not proportionately reflected in teaching and the percentage of Latino principals is low. For example, in Broward County — where Latinos represent one-fourth of the student body — only 6 percent of school principals are Latinos.<sup>140</sup>

States need to do more to ensure that excellent teachers are in the schools with the highest student needs, including high poverty and low levels of English proficiency.

# What Legislators Need to Know

State policymakers need to understand the specific challenges faced by their state in order to create policies to support effective educators for all students, including ELLs and students with significant delays in academic achievement. Legislators need to seek answers to the following questions:

- What is the distribution of highly qualified teachers in districts with majority Latino schools?
- How are teachers and administrators being prepared to address the educational needs of Latinos and ELLs?
- Does the state define the qualities of effective teachers of Latinos and ELLs?
- What has the state done to create a pipeline for recruiting Latino teachers?
- How are teachers currently being evaluated in the state? How is that information being used? Is it being used to help struggling teachers improve or to recognize, retain and distribute effective teachers?
- What support systems has the state established to provide teachers the professional development they need to serve all students adequately?

# Research

## Latino students lack access to effective teachers.

Research on teacher quality continues to confirm that good teachers produce good outcomes for students. In many states, the distribution of low-performing teachers tends to favor low-performing schools. Low-performing teachers are more likely to be teaching out of field and more likely to do poorly on certification exams. These teachers are also more likely to remain in low-performing schools. In addition, low-performing schools have higher percentages of new teachers or teachers with weaker backgrounds in the subjects they are teaching.<sup>141</sup> Majority Latino high schools are also more likely to have inexperienced teachers (less than three years of teaching experience) than majority white high schools.<sup>142</sup>

Research also indicates that having content area knowledge is an important component of effective teaching.<sup>143</sup> A teacher's credentials and training measurably affect student achievement and predict higher student achievement; teachers certified in the subject they were assigned to teach had eight times the impact on student achievement as did reducing the class size by five students.<sup>144</sup>

States facing inequitable distribution of teachers have little research on effective methods for addressing this issue. The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center) found several states that were attempting to address the issue.<sup>145</sup> Based on the experiences in several states, the TQ Center issued the following recommendations for teacher recruitment; although these recommendations are appropriate for all states, those with large concentrations of Latinos should consider expedited implementation to decrease the inequitable distribution of effective teachers:

- Create high quality alternative routes for teacher preparation and certification.
- Fully utilize community colleges for teacher preparation.
- Implement grow-your-own<sup>146</sup> strategies for hard-to-staff schools.
- Revise transfer and hiring practices for at-risk schools to provide more options and more control over budgets and recruitment decisions.

## Invest in educator qualities that support Latino achievement.

Educators serving Latino children and English language learners need the tools to ensure that they are able to meet their needs. Educators must understand the cultures of the students they serve and how the students' culture impacts behavior as well as learning. Teachers must also recognize the diversity of the ELL population and the relevance of student literacy histories and background content knowledge.<sup>147</sup> Research has found that literacy skills in one language can be harnessed and transferred to a second language.<sup>148</sup> Therefore, a student's formal education and level of literacy in his or her native language should shape

the nature of the instruction the student receives when learning English. This asset-based approach to Latino children changes the belief that Latinos are underachievers and, instead, focuses on the strength of communities and families.<sup>149</sup> Teachers who are able to relate to their students or have familiarity with the needs and strengths of a community are better positioned to build important relationships with students and their families.<sup>150</sup>

The strengths of Latino communities can also be harnessed by ensuring that parents are meaningfully included in the life of the school. By reaching into the community, through home visits or neighborhood events, educators can create opportunities to partner with parents, even when these parents are prevented from attending school events because of work or family obligations.<sup>151</sup>

Effective educators ensure that Latino students are fully integrated into the life of the schools by participating in sports, clubs and other extracurricular activities. Latino students are less likely to participate in these activities.<sup>152</sup> Educators should also create conditions for Latino high school students to build their experience in preparation for college attendance, such as internships and college visits. Finally, educators should ensure that Latino students are immersed in a culture of high expectations that prepares them to graduate ready for college and careers.

### **Increasing the teacher pipeline for Latinos.**

Not surprisingly, schools in the U.S. struggle to recruit Latino teachers — who represent less than 7 percent of all teachers.<sup>153</sup> As a result, some communities have faced the challenge by creating their own pipeline by tapping into their school assets. Because of the requirement of No Child Left Behind that paraprofessionals have at least an associate degree (or meet high state standards),<sup>154</sup> these individuals may have already obtained part of the necessary education to have credentials as teachers. Typically, paraprofessionals mirror the demographics in the community, are experienced and mature, and have a deep understanding of the culture of their students. Veteran paraprofessionals typically outperform new teachers on certain tasks, including classroom management.<sup>155</sup>

# State Policy Approaches

As policymakers and advocates develop their educator effectiveness policy proposals, the needs of Latino children must be taken into consideration. To ensure the needs of Hispanic and ELL children, we have developed the following policy priorities on educator effectiveness.



**Low Cost**

## **Allot time for professional development that facilitates collaboration among teachers.**

Sharing best practices helps teachers improve their classroom strategies, tailor their assignments to students' needs, better evaluate student work and contribute to data-based decision making to guide school improvement.<sup>156</sup> States and districts should simplify data for teachers so that they understand it and use it effectively to guide their instruction.

## **Support an increased use of modeling and coaching to improve classroom instruction.**

Schoolwide coaching initiatives seek to improve student achievement by improving the way teachers teach in the classroom. Provide teachers with feedback on their classroom practice in order to increase student learning and to help all educators continually improve.<sup>157</sup>

## **Promote and support recruitment of a diverse teacher workforce, especially those teachers who are culturally and linguistically competent.**

The presence of a few teachers of color would not be nearly enough to remedy the lack of familiarity with issues specific to communities of color. States should provide districts additional meaningful resources and financial support to programs that result in the successful recruitment, retention and training of teachers who are culturally competent, bicultural or multicultural.



**Medium Cost**

### **Provide specific professional development in instruction and assessment of English language learners.**

Professional development should be a tool that helps teachers improve instruction and ensures that they receive routine evaluations, support, instruction and cultural awareness on how to teach students with unique needs and from different backgrounds. It is important that all teachers (regardless of their subject area), administrators and staff who work directly with ELL students receive professional development both during pre- and in-service programs to better understand the diverse needs of Latinos and ELLs.

### **Increase the number of and support for ESL and bilingual teachers and teachers of Latino students.**

Students who need particular supports, such as ELLs, should have teachers who are well-equipped and prepared to meet their needs. The number of multicultural and multilingual teachers in every school district should reflect and represent the student demographics. More ESL and bilingual teachers are needed both in the pipeline and in the classroom. Additionally, it is important to provide ESL teachers with specialized education, qualifying them as ESL- or bilingual-certified teachers before teaching ELL students.

### **Align evaluation systems to timely, high-quality professional development.**

In order for teacher evaluations to be effective, information about classroom practice must be readily available and data should be translated so that teachers can use it to improve their instruction. Information that comprises periodic classroom assessments, benchmark exams and quality evaluations can help a teacher identify and understand which practices helped a student learn and which did not.<sup>158</sup>

### **Invest in research in order to continuously improve our nation's schools.**

Ongoing research needs to be done to meet the needs of our changing demographics. Similarly, there is a need to increase funding for quality research to ensure ongoing improvement of teacher effectiveness plans and to increase the amount and quality of research on all issues related to culturally responsive teaching.



**High Cost**

**Develop teacher effectiveness systems that recognize the differentiation of teaching that is needed for different student populations.**

Given that teachers are a critical determinant of how a student will perform academically, they should be evaluated on how well their students are learning. Teacher effectiveness systems need to be responsive to the needs of all students, including ELLs and other subgroups.

**Include individual student's achievement and significant growth as part of a teacher evaluation system.**

This will distinguish those teachers who are making measurable improvements in student learning.

**Improve the effectiveness and appropriateness of assessments measuring student achievement.**

This includes making the assessments relevant and rigorous for students of color and for native students who may have unique learning needs and challenges. These assessments should also measure the achievement growth of disaggregated groups of students over time in order to evaluate school and teacher accountability.

# Promising Practices

As education reforms unfold, policymakers need to take into consideration the changing demographics of the nation's public school systems and to reflect it in their state's education reform policies. The following promising programs highlight some of the above recommendations.

The **Illinois** "Grow Your Own" Teacher Education Initiative has brought together stakeholders, including school districts, colleges and universities, and community-based organizations, to support aspiring teachers from several low-income communities. Aspiring teachers are provided financial support as well as support for child care and transportation. Teachers who work in eligible schools (high poverty, high teacher turnover or teachers who are from substantially different ethnic backgrounds than their students) after graduation are eligible to have their student loans completely forgiven. The initiative has already graduated 23 teachers as of May 2010, of whom nine completed the requirements to become bilingual teachers.<sup>159</sup>

In **California**, in conjunction with the California State University (CSU) system, there has been a focus on recruiting at-risk youth high school students to become teachers.<sup>160</sup> The newest program of the CSU system is the Chico Rural Teacher Pathway — a two-year program designed to recruit 30 high school seniors each year who may have the desire, but perhaps not the means, to attain teaching credentials — which was recently funded for \$500,000 by CalGrip (California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention).<sup>161</sup> The students for this program will be recruited from regional populations where students are least likely to receive higher education degrees or teaching certificates. The program aims to address specific student failures in rural and low-income schools by recruiting future teachers who come from local communities and share similar socioeconomic and cultural experiences.





**CA**

With the passage of SB10-191,<sup>162</sup> **Colorado** became a state leader in teacher effectiveness. SB10-91 is considered a potential national model legislation for teacher effectiveness systems by requiring annual evaluations for every teacher and principal in the state, based at least 50 percent on student growth measures, and including multiple measures of teacher effectiveness,<sup>163</sup> career ladders with pay for the most effective teachers and tenure decisions based on effectiveness. SB10-191 reflects an important shift in thinking about teacher quality by ensuring that teachers not only have the qualifications to teach but are also having an impact on student achievement.

**California** commissioned a study of the availability and effectiveness of cultural competency training for teachers in California schools, which was authorized by AB 54 in 2003.<sup>164</sup> This study was a first step in understanding the needs of meeting California's diverse student population.

# Take Action

- 1** Promote and support recruitment of a diverse teacher workforce.
- 2** Support teacher effectiveness policies based on growth in academic achievement for all students.
- 3** Adopt policies to ensure that teachers and school leaders are culturally competent.
- 4** Develop teacher effectiveness systems which recognize the differentiation of teaching that is needed for different student populations.
- 5** Provide teachers and administrators of diverse learners the professional development they need to improve classroom instruction and leadership decision making.
- 6** Invest in research in order to continuously improve our nation's schools.

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Recommendation **Six**

# College Admission

**SEIS**

## One

Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families

## Two

Improve middle and high school college and career counseling

## Three

Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs

## Four

Align the K–12 education system with international standards and college admission expectations

## Five

Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention

## Six

Clarify and simplify the admission process

## Seven

Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent

## Eight

Keep college affordable

## Nine

Dramatically increase college completion rates

## Ten

Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs

## Background

Access to higher education has been a major focus for policymakers seeking to improve educational opportunities for Latinos in the United States. Access to higher education requires admission to a specific institution. This admission process can be cumbersome, especially at selective institutions. Selective institutions have strict admission requirements and accept a limited percentage of the students who apply. This, in turn, can be challenging for students who are the first in their family to apply to college and who may not be familiar with the extensive requirements or overall admission process. Many college-ready Latino students would be the first in their family to apply to college. Clarifying and simplifying the admission process for all institutions is important and can lead to increases in Latino college enrollment.

Although nationally Latino students are being admitted to colleges across the country, a majority of Latino undergraduates are highly concentrated in a small set of institutions identified as Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs). These institutions are defined by their concentrated enrollment,<sup>165</sup> not by their mission. HSIs are defined in federal law as accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25 percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment. In 2008-09, HSIs represented less than 10 percent of degree-granting institutions of higher education but enrolled just over 50 percent of Latino undergraduates.<sup>166</sup> Many of these HSIs are open admission institutions (i.e., these institutions have limited or no admission criteria). As a result, their admission process is relatively simple and clear for students — students need only register for admission.

As the number of Latino students prepared for college increases in most states, efforts to clarify and simplify the college admission processes will need to further assist nontraditional students, such as first-generation attendees, Latinos, lower-income and working adults, in achieving success in postsecondary education.



# What Legislators Need to Know

To understand the current public institutional admission policies to evaluate possible reforms, legislators may want to seek answers to the following questions:

- 
- Does the state higher education department sponsor a website to help students and families find information and compare institutions in both English and Spanish?
- 
- Is a common application for public institutions available? If so, what percentage of the state's Latino applicants to public institutions use this application?
- 
- How many of the state's Latino high school graduates immediately enroll in college?
- 
- How many of the public colleges and universities in the state are open admission institutions?
- 
- Are there Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) in the state?
- 
- What percentage of Latino students transfer from two- to four-year degree programs annually?

# Research

## **The college-going rate of Hispanics is lower than that of others.**

Latino young adults are less likely to be enrolled in college than other students. In 2008, the college-going rate for Hispanic high school completers between 18–24 years of age was 37 percent. In comparison, the rate was 40 percent for blacks and 49 percent for whites of the same age cohort.<sup>167</sup> Of all 18- to 24-year-olds, the percent of Latinos enrolled in college was 26 percent, compared to 32 percent for blacks and 44 percent for whites.<sup>168</sup> Latinos represent 13 percent of all undergraduate students.<sup>169</sup>

## **The majority of Latino college students are enrolled in open admission institutions where they live.**

In general, community colleges are open admission institutions. In 2008, more than half of Hispanic students were enrolled in community colleges or two-year institutions.<sup>170</sup> In addition to being open admission institutions, community colleges are often lower in cost and are more centrally located for Latino students. In 2008, 93 percent of Latino students attended institutions in their state of legal residence; this is higher than all undergraduates (87 percent) and every racial/ethnic group. In focus groups with Latino students, the location, accessibility and lower cost of these institutions informed their decisions to apply for admission at the institution of their choice.<sup>171</sup>

### **Just over half of Latinos are enrolled in Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs).**

Further, just over half of Latino undergraduates were enrolled in HSIs in 2007-08.<sup>172</sup> Many of these institutions are located in communities with large or growing Latino populations. While some HSIs are selective, over 50 percent are not. These institutions have open admission and are accessible to many in their community.<sup>173</sup> This characterization of HSIs as nonselective should not be taken to mean that HSIs are not quality institutions of higher education. A philosophy of open admission, community development and academic preparation allows HSIs to be uniquely community institutions of first choice for Latino students.

### **The transfer rate from community colleges to public universities is low for Latinos and other students.**

Many Latinos start their college education at a community college. In 2008, 49 percent of Hispanics were enrolled in community colleges and 31 percent were enrolled at public colleges and universities. However, for students who are interested in continuing their education at a four-year institution, the overall transfer rate is low. The national transfer rate from two- to four-year institutions is less than 30 percent. In some states with high Latino college enrollment, the transfer rate is less than 20 percent.<sup>174</sup> Given the concentration of Latino college students in two-year institutions, the low transfer rate to four-year institutions limits the college completion of a bachelor's degree for these and other students.

# State Policy Approaches



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**Low Cost**

## **Provide a statewide college application for public institutions in both English and Spanish.**

In **Texas**, a common college application simplifies the application process by allowing students to complete one application that can be submitted to any Texas public university. Instructions on completing the application are printed in both English and Spanish.



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**Medium Cost**

## **Require a simplified transfer pathway to colleges and universities.**

In 2010, **California** passed a transfer reform package (SB 1140 and AB 2302) to simplify the confusing transfer pathway between community colleges and colleges/universities. The package creates a clear transfer path for all California community college students, no matter which college they attend. Students who successfully complete 60 units of transferable course work at a community college will receive an associate degree and guaranteed admission with upper-division junior standing to a California State University system institution. The majority of Latino students in colleges in California are enrolled at community colleges.

In **Florida**, students who complete an associate degree at a community college can enroll in and earn a bachelor's degree at a state university. This transfer articulation is known as the 2+2 Program in which a statewide course numbering system facilitates the transfer of students among postsecondary institutions. For example, the specific courses that make up the 36-hour general education block vary from one institution to another. However, if a student completes the 36-hour general education block at any community or state university, it will be accepted in total by any other public institution in Florida, and no further courses will be required to meet the general education component.

### **Offer personalized guidance to students and their families in completing the admission process.**

In 2003, **Texas** started the Texas GO Center Project targeting students who were academically prepared but chose not to attend college by helping them complete college and financial aid applications. The GO Centers are staffed with current college students, high school peers, members of the community and a committed faculty member, as well as laptops and/or computers to help students with applications online. In a study done by Stanford University, Hispanic student application rates increased 30.8 percentage points with the assistance of a GO Center. Furthermore, Hispanic enrollment rates increased 9 percentage points and their one-year college persistence rate increased 12.6 points with students exposed to the GO Center for at least two years.<sup>175</sup>



### **Guarantee need-based aid for qualified students.**

State policymakers can look to institutions with a high concentration of Latinos as a guide for programs working for Latinos that can inform state policy. In **Texas**, the University of Texas at El Paso Promise Plan covers all tuition and mandatory fees. Eligible students must have family incomes of \$30,000 or less, be Texas residents, complete 30 credits a year, and earn a GPA of 2.0 or higher. First-time transfer students to UTEP are also eligible. The scholarship is available only for four consecutive years of enrollment and has resulted in increased enrollment and retention of low-income students, many of whom are Latino.

# Take Action

- 1** Identify the college-going rate for students graduating from high school and have this information disaggregated by race/ethnicity.
- 2** Conduct town hall meetings with Hispanic families and students, and with high school and admission counselors, to identify barriers or cumbersome elements of the admission process in order to improve the process for traditional-age students as well as returning students.
- 3** Request an evaluation by public selective institutions of state policies that may complicate the admission process for first-generation or low-income students.
- 4** Survey public institutions about the viability and criteria needed to adopt a common application for admission or a more standardized and simplified admission process.
- 5** Determine if there are state policies that address transfer between public institutions. Evaluate the effectiveness of these policies and consider alternative policy efforts to increase transfer rates for all students.
- 6** Request an analysis of demographic trends in growth of college-ready students and the institutional capacity of public institutions in the state.

## Notes

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Recommendations **Seven & Eight**

# College Affordability & Student Financial Aid

STATE  
OCHO

## One

Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families

## Two

Improve middle and high school college and career counseling

## Three

Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs

## Four

Align the K–12 education system with international standards and college admission expectations

## Five

Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention

## Six

Clarify and simplify the admission process

## Seven

Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent

## Eight

Keep college affordable

## Nine

Dramatically increase college completion rates

## Ten

Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs

## Background

State legislators and their constituents are concerned about the rising cost of attending college and the ability of state, federal and family resources to keep pace. Rising costs are of particular concern to Latinos and other students from lower- and moderate-income families and may dampen their college aspirations as well as their degree completion rates. Coupled with the fact that fewer well-paying jobs are available to people with no college education, a statewide commitment to keeping college affordable helps more Latinos obtain postsecondary degrees and thereby supports state economic development.

Many state legislators focus on rising tuition as the primary indicator of college “affordability.” But tuition is only part of the picture. Affordability depends on several factors, including living expenses, family income and the availability of financial aid. All of these elements together produce the “net cost” of attending college. Although living expenses are incurred whether or not individuals are in school, these expenses (on or off campus) constitute the largest portion of total college costs for many students. Another central issue is the loss of income students may experience in seeking an appropriate balance between studying, working and managing other family obligations.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 created the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant Program, now called the Federal Pell Grant Program, to increase college enrollment of low-income students by providing need-based grants. Funding of Pell Grants has increased over the years but not rapidly enough to keep pace with rising college costs along with the growth in the number of eligible recipients. The federal government has been the primary provider of financial aid, and in 2009-10 the federal share of all grant dollars exceeded that of institutional grants.<sup>176</sup> In addition, the maximum Pell Grant awarded for an academic year was recently increased to \$5,550 after a decade of slow or no adjustments in the annual limit.

Although Pell Grants are targeted at low-income students, several states consider factors not related to financial circumstances in awarding aid. Beginning with the Georgia Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) scholarship program in 1993, merit-based financial aid programs emerged as a popular policy option. Aimed at providing incentives for students to perform academically and to keep “the best and the brightest” in state, these programs also sought to address the college cost concerns of middle-income families. Following on the popularity of the HOPE Scholarship, several other states created large merit programs, including Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico and Tennessee.

During the last decade, states put more money into merit-based financial aid than need-based financial aid. According to the College Board (2010), the percentage of state grant dollars for undergraduates awarded without regard to income increased from 11 percent in 1988-89 to 28 percent in 2008-09. In the most recent half of the decade (2003-04 to 2008-09), need-based grant aid per student increased by 5 percent, while non-need-based state grant aid rose by 17 percent despite some retrenchment due to the recession.<sup>177</sup> According to the 2008-09 annual survey conducted by the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP), 30 states identified programs that made awards based solely on merit criteria, and that accounted for 19 percent of dollars awarded.

In the context of increasing affordability, the key disadvantage of merit-based programs is that they focus aid on students who would likely enroll in college (although perhaps not in state) without the state grant incentive. For example, recent changes to Georgia’s HOPE scholarship restrict the maximum award to students achieving a high school GPA of 3.7 and SAT score of 1200. In addition, the award no longer covers the cost of fees and books. Mean SAT scores (critical reading and mathematics) earned by Latinos nationally have hovered around 920 for the past decade, putting them at a competitive disadvantage for receipt of these funds and those with similar awarding criteria.<sup>178</sup>

While studies have shown that the simplicity and assurance of some state merit-based programs have a positive effect on college enrollment, grant aid to low- and moderate-income students has a greater impact on enrollment and graduation than aid distributed to more affluent students.

As college costs increase and grants plateau, students turn to loans and the type of institution they attend makes a big difference in their debt level upon graduation. Among dependent students from families with incomes under \$30,000:

- The average debt for the 68 percent of public four-year college graduates who borrowed was \$16,500 in 2007-08.
- The average debt was \$21,000 for the 84 percent of graduates who borrowed while attending four-year nonprofit institutions.
- Almost all students (99 percent) who enrolled in the for-profit sector borrowed student loans, with the average debt level rising to \$30,500 for graduates of four-year for-profit institutions.<sup>179</sup> Low-income and lower-middle-income students are significantly overrepresented in the for-profit sector, and therefore are more likely to borrow and borrow more.<sup>180</sup>

Although many graduates are able to repay their loans relatively quickly, student loan debt creates a real hardship for others, and particularly for those who drop out before obtaining a degree.

# What Legislators Need to Know

To evaluate the state's affordability landscape in general and with specific regard to Latino populations, legislators may want to seek answers to the following questions:

- In the overall state budget, what has happened to the share that goes to higher education?
- If state appropriations have decreased, what trends appear in regard to tuition levels and availability of financial aid and how do they affect families' ability to pay? What percentage of college costs does the state cover versus the student? How has this changed over the last decade?
- What drives tuition increases in the state? Who sets the tuition policy?
- Given that a high percentage of Latino college students attend two-year colleges, will persistent trends in tuition and financial aid have a disproportionate impact on that sector and therefore these students?
- What is the tuition policy related to undocumented students and what is the effect on college enrollment of Latino students as they complete high school?
- What happened to college enrollments during the last decade (e.g., numbers of students, enrollment intensity, ethnic and economic representation of enrollees)?
- What state need-based aid programs exist and how many students are (and are not) taking advantage of them? Are there differences by institutional type and/or student characteristics that warrant further investigation? Who oversees the financial aid policy?

- 
- Is state policy aligned with federal policy so that students are taking full advantage of federal money (i.e., Pell Grants and tax credits)?
- 
- What state merit-based programs exist? Is the overall distribution of these funds supportive of educational opportunity for low- and moderate-income students or do program rules and structures work against representative participation of these students in these programs?
- 
- Of the students who enroll in college, how long does it take to graduate and how much are they borrowing to do so? Are there differences by institutional type and/or student characteristics that warrant further investigation?
- 
- What are the median earnings and tax payments for workers, and how do they vary by education level? Would a greater investment in financial aid result in higher college completion rates and more tax revenue to the state?

# Research

## **Overall, states are not doing well at assuring college affordability.**

The survey of state higher education policy, *Measuring Up 2008*<sup>181</sup> flunks most every state on affordability, arguing that states are not effectively using available policies to ensure that college tuition remains affordable for the neediest students. Some reasons for this have been mentioned: state appropriations to higher education have not kept pace with increasing enrollments, tuition has increased, and grant aid has not kept up.

## **Decreasing state appropriations contribute to higher tuition.**

There is a close relationship between decreases in state appropriations for higher education and increases in tuition.<sup>182</sup> The cost of educating students rose a modest 3 percent between 1998 and 2005 at public research institutions, for example, but the student share of that cost rose 12 percentage points — from 35 percent (\$4,602) to 47 percent (\$6,328).<sup>183</sup> This increase coincides with the average decrease in the state share through appropriations. Tough state economies and cuts for higher education are responsible in large part for tuition increases. Students are paying more for higher education while states are contributing less.

## **Investments in affordability return to the state.**

The College Board's publication *Education Pays 2010* illuminates the fact that investing in student success in college is worthwhile for states. We know that education level is associated with higher income and higher tax revenues for the state, greater community service and charitable donations, improved health, and less dependence on the human services and criminal justice systems. Increased levels of educational attainment also significantly improve the prospects of the next generation.

## **Today's financial aid system is out of sync with today's college student.**

State financial aid systems are targeted toward what used to be (but no longer is) the "traditional" student: an 18- to 24-year-old, right out of high school who enrolls in college and finishes in four years. Today's college students often take longer to finish, transfer between institutions and are over age 24. Simplifying the federal financial aid system and coordinating academic classes between two- and four-year institutions will help today's students pay for and complete a credential or degree.



**WA**



### **Merit-based financial aid does not necessarily serve the most financially needy students.**

During the past decade, states have invested significantly more financial aid in merit-based programs. Studies indicate that merit programs have helped keep academically talented high school students in state. But merit programs disproportionately reward students who most likely can afford and will go to college anyway. In tight economic times, merit aid may compete with critical funding for need-based programs.

### **Many students who are eligible for financial aid do not seek or obtain it.**

According to the American Council on Education, many low- to moderate-income high school graduates are eligible but do not apply for Pell Grants. These students may be unaware of their eligibility or may be intimidated by the federal application process. As documented by *Excelencia in Education*<sup>184</sup> and the College Board,<sup>185</sup> local, institutional and statewide outreach programs, along with continued simplification of the federal system, can help these students receive the financial aid for which they are eligible.

### **Money is crucial for success, but money alone is not sufficient.**

Students cite the inability to afford college as the most common reason for not attending. Research has found that much of this perception is inaccurate. Students presume they cannot afford college but do not know much about the different kinds of institutions or financial aid. The emergence of net price calculators coupled with effective outreach and counseling, may help to reduce these misperceptions and result in greater awareness of options. However, financial aid alone is not enough to guarantee opportunities and success. Even with sufficient financial assistance, students may not complete their degrees if they are not well-prepared for college in the first place and if they do not receive ongoing personal and social support throughout their college experience.

# State Policy Approaches



Low Cost

## Align appropriations, tuition and financial aid policy.

The major elements of higher education financing policy — appropriations, tuition and financial aid — need to be considered together in order to address college affordability. All three are intimately linked: decisions about one directly affect the other two. Typically, however, decisions regarding these policies are made independently. As a result, decisions in the legislature regarding appropriations or financial aid can lead to unintended changes in tuition or worse — higher education finance policies that work against each other.

## Improve student information and outreach.

Many students, especially those who are first-generation college students, are unaware of their potential eligibility for financial aid. States and communities are actively engaged in efforts to reach students with this information. This includes informing students about the FAFSA, helping them complete it and identifying websites that offer financial aid information. College Goal Sunday is a national effort that draws on resources in the community to focus student and family attention on college and the sources of financial aid. The Puente Project in **California** places counselors in both high schools and colleges to provide extensive academic, personal and financial aid counseling. **North Carolina's** College Application Week aims to provide every graduating high school senior the opportunity to apply to college online, with a focus on first-generation students and students who may not otherwise apply. **Nevada** and **Alaska** have also drawn on state-level organizations to address early awareness and intervention activities to raise college participation.<sup>186</sup>

## Seek out matching grant programs with local foundations.

The Gates Foundation supports the **Washington** State Achievers program in 16 high schools. Scholarship recipients may receive up to \$5,000 per year for college. In **Colorado**, the Denver Scholarship Foundation provides counseling support to high school students to help them enroll in and receive funding for college. The foundation supports counselors who make sure students complete the FAFSA and receive the federal and state grants for which they may be eligible.



### Medium Cost

#### **Help institutions control costs.**

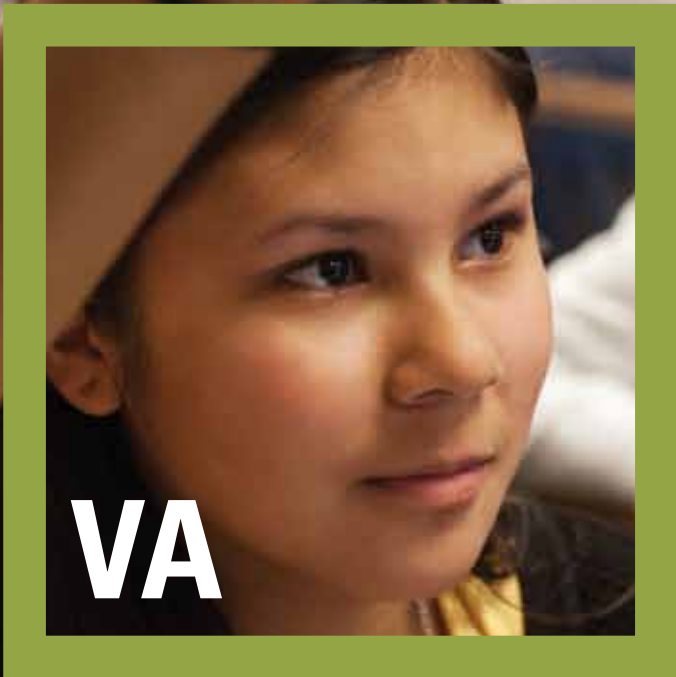
Many state officials are working with colleges and universities to support and encourage (but not necessarily mandate) cost control measures. These include supporting joint contracts for certain services, expanding the use of technology, improving administrative efficiency, and increasing faculty teaching loads.

#### **Expand work-study programs.**

Work-study programs subsidize employment for enrolled college students. These programs are a great value for states and institutions by saving on labor costs while providing valuable work experience. In addition, students increasingly need to work in order to pay for college and living expenses, and the availability of work-study jobs helps to minimize student loan debt.

#### **Focus on policies that help students earn their degrees in four years.**

Every additional year students spend in a higher education system increases the cost for both the state and the student. Lawmakers are experimenting with policy reforms and incentives that help students complete their degrees in four years. Such policies include requiring rigorous high school preparation, allowing dual and concurrent enrollment options, and providing tuition or other monetary incentives for completing college in four years. Of particular importance is ensuring that there are enough resources to allow students to enroll in all the courses they need to graduate in a timely manner.



**VA**



### Increase and/or target financial aid and other resources.

For most states, it is unlikely there will be significant new money to increase need-based student aid, so legislators are considering better ways to target financial aid, and to link aid in ways that improve students' success in college. States have begun to invest in a new generation of financial aid programs that let students and families know well in advance about resources to attend college and that encourage students to take a rigorous high school curriculum and graduate. Early commitment financial aid programs guarantee college tuition to qualified low-income students in middle school. They are appealing because they help those most in need, reach out early and offer incentives for students to graduate. Students earn the money for college by taking tough courses, staying out of trouble and maintaining good grades.

### Offer cash incentives to students.

**Virginia** has established Two-Year College Transfer grants. These awards provide an additional \$1,000 annual incentive for students who have received an associate degree and will enroll in a four-year institution the following year, majoring in a shortage field (e.g., science, technology, engineering, mathematics or nursing).

### Encourage and reward students for being well-prepared for college.

The **Indiana** Twenty-first Century Scholars Program provides academic and college-preparation assistance through high school to low-income middle school students who sign a pledge to complete high school and avoid illegal activities. If a student graduates from high school with at least a 2.0 grade point average, and has stayed out of trouble, he or she is guaranteed four years of financial aid covering all tuition and fees at an in-state public college or university or an equivalent amount at an in-state private institution. The program receives substantial state support and studies to date show promising results.

**Oklahoma's** Promise Scholarship targets low-income students in middle school as well. They agree to take a rigorous high school curriculum, maintain a 2.5 grade point average and good behavior, and complete the FAFSA.

**Minnesota** and **Oregon** have developed a "Shared Responsibility Model" of financial assistance that outlines the various responsibilities of students, their families, the public and philanthropic partners, and the universities, to make college more affordable. This approach combines several components of financial aid policy, requiring students to pay some of the costs, and ensuring that states and students receive available federal and institutional aid. It assumes that all students have a responsibility for investing in postsecondary education, but that low- and moderate-income families need help to reduce the disproportionate burden of the price of a college education.



**High Cost**

### **Provide student loan forgiveness for high-need fields.**

Most states have loan forgiveness programs to encourage students to stay in the state and work after graduation, typically in high-need fields such as math and science, teaching, and medical practice in rural communities. For students interested in these fields, loan forgiveness can be a valuable way to make college more affordable and to obtain work experience, while benefiting the state. Some of these programs are at risk as a result of current economic pressures.

### **Provide financial aid for adult learners.**

**Michigan** and **Kentucky** recognize that helping adults complete a college degree is an investment with significant returns. In every state there are thousands of adults ages 25 through 54 with some college credit but no degree. Kentucky identifies and contacts those people, providing information about options for returning to college to finish a degree. Michigan provides up to \$5,000 for adults to attend two years at a community college.

### **Provide guaranteed tuition and state savings programs.**

Almost all states have 529 college savings accounts that help students and families save for college. A 529 plan allows tax-free withdrawals for qualified education expenses. There are two types of plans: prepaid tuition and savings. Prepaid tuition plans (sometimes called guaranteed savings plans) are available in several states and allow for the prepurchase of tuition based on current rates. They are then paid out at the future cost when the student is in college.

### **Increase and target investments in community colleges.**

Community colleges play a vital role in the higher education system. They provide opportunities for many traditionally underserved students to obtain certificates and degrees; they help students transfer to four-year institutions; and they serve adult students. They are a good investment for states and for certain students, because the average tuition and fees for one year at a community college is \$2,713, compared to \$7,605 for a four-year public institution.<sup>187</sup> Because many students who begin their higher education at a community college do not earn a four-year degree, state policy should focus on improving remedial education and transfer agreements. This is especially important for Latino students, as they are overrepresented in the community college sector.

# Take Action

- 1** Set the agenda. Bring legislators together with other higher education policymakers to talk about affordability. Too often, the legislature's agenda for higher education is reactive rather than proactive and deals with individual issues rather than the big picture. Legislators can take the initiative to identify a targeted set of priorities for the year ahead.
- 2** Help bring media and legislative attention to the relationship between affordability, access and success. Sponsor a series of workshops or invite speakers to talk with state policymakers about these issues.
- 3** Support federal student aid simplification. Ensure that state grant programs and the application processes for these funds do not counteract federal simplification efforts.
- 4** Find reliable ways to measure the impact of affordability on student access, choice and success. Rather than monitoring only tuition or "sticker price," pay attention to "net price" — that is, tuition and fees minus financial aid grants. Closely examine family "ability to pay" — the percentage of family income required to cover the net price of college for students at different income levels.
- 5** Launch a statewide discussion: What responsibility does the state have to students for higher education in today's economy? What portion ought to be covered by the state, the student and the institution? (What's the fair share?)

# Take Action

- 6** Target financial aid or incentives on low-income — the most price-sensitive — students. Enrollment and success of higher-income students are not significantly affected by moderate increases in price. This will begin with a close examination of current financial aid policies and good data about how the state is using (and not using) various forms of state and federal aid.
- 7** Ask your higher education institutions how productive they are. What are they doing to lower costs? Together, consider how the state policy can provide incentives for institutions to contain costs while making it possible for more students to complete their degrees.
- 8** Sponsor a discussion or series of discussions on merit-based aid versus need-based aid. Help your colleagues become more aware of the different types of students served and the different public policy goals achieved by both forms of aid. Closely examine the investment the state makes in both types of programs and the number of students who use them.
- 9** Examine the instability in state funding. Rising tuition and postsecondary “unaffordability” are the result of various factors. Unstable state funding plays a significant role in the ongoing increase in tuition and creates unexpected and unplanned increases for students and families. Reaching some level of funding stability and creating incentives for higher education funding are two ways legislators can help reduce the rate of tuition increases. This will require a shift in focus from revenues and inputs to costs and quality, which can make operations more efficient and contain — or even reduce — spending.



## Notes

176. *Trends in Student Aid 2010*, Figure 3.
177. *Ibid.*, Figure 15.
178. SAT Critical Reading, Mathematics and Writing: Mean Scores by Race/Ethnicity. (New York: The College Board, 2010). <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/sat/cb-seniors-2010/tables>
179. *Trends in Student Aid 2010*, Figure 9.
180. *Education Pays 2010*, Figure 2.4b.
181. National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education: *Measuring Up 2008: The National Report Card on Education*. San Jose: NCPPHE, 2008.
182. Wellman, J. V., D. M. Desrochers, and C. M. Lenihan: *The Growing Imbalance: Recent Trends in U.S. Postsecondary Education Finance*. Washington, DC: Delta Cost Project, 2008.
183. *Ibid.*
184. Santiago, D. 2010. *Reality Check: Hispanic-Serving Institutions on the Texas Border Strategizing Financial Aid*. *Excelencia in Education*.
185. *The Financial Aid Challenge: Successful Practices that Address the Underutilization of Financial Aid in Community Colleges*, 2010. The College Board.
186. *Ibid.*
187. *Trends in College Pricing 2010*, Figure 1. The College Board.



Recommendation **Nine**

# College Completion

**NUOVE**

## One

Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families

## Two

Improve middle and high school college and career counseling

## Three

Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs

## Four

Align the K–12 education system with international standards and college admission expectations

## Five

Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention

## Six

Clarify and simplify the admission process

## Seven

Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent

## Eight

Keep college affordable

## Nine

Dramatically increase college completion rates

## Ten

Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs

## Background

Projections make clear that reaching national goals on college completion requires particular attention to the completion rates of Latino students. Given the growth and limited educational attainment levels of this population, dramatically increasing college completion rates for Latinos, while increasing the rates of all students, is important. This requires addressing the lower college graduation rate for Latinos, the high percentage of students who take remediation and are not college ready, the high percentage of college dropouts, the small percentage of those who transfer to universities, and the strategies to improve support services to degree attainment.

Compared to other groups, the college graduation rate for Latinos at four-year institutions (47 percent) is lower than the average of all students (56 percent).<sup>188</sup> Although this analysis does not capture all college students (this only includes first-time, full-time freshmen who complete their degrees within six years), it is an important measure of overall college completion for policymakers examining time to degree for traditional-age college students. Other metrics to consider include the graduation of full-time equivalent students (which include part-time students) and college completion as measured within specific locations.

College success and degree completion have historically received less attention in policy conversations about higher education than access and participation. There are numerous programs at the federal, state and local levels that improve college preparation and access for targeted students. However, the recognition that access to college is a necessary prerequisite but not sufficient to ensure college completion is increasing in policy conversations. Efforts to address student persistence and retention are also critically important to increase college completion.

About half of all Latino undergraduates are enrolled in two-year institutions. Unfortunately, too few complete an associate degree or transfer to a college/university. In 2010, 7 percent of Latino adults had earned an associate degree (3 percent earned occupational degrees and 4 percent earned academic degrees).<sup>189</sup> Many factors combine to lower the college completion of Latinos, such as increasing college costs, limits to financial aid, inadequate academic preparation, lack of other college-ready skills, lack of sufficient support services and the need to work full time.

# What Legislators Need to Know

To evaluate the state's college completion performance, legislators may want to seek answers to the following questions:

- What percentage of Latino adults in the state have earned an associate degree? A bachelor's degree?
- What are the retention rates for Latinos at public institutions?
- What percentage of Latino students are dropping out/stopping out of higher education?
- What are the graduation rates for Latinos in the state?
- What percentage of incoming Latino college students are required to take at least one remedial course? Of those, how many successfully complete the remedial course?
- What percentage of students who take remedial/developmental education complete a certificate or degree?
- When are Latino students dropping out (e.g., first year, second year)?
- Why are Latino students dropping out?

# Research

## **Over one-third of Latino college students enroll in remedial college courses.**

The alignment between high school curriculum offered and academic preparation for college is off track in too many communities where Latinos are educated. As a result, many Latino students who first enroll in college are required to enroll in remedial or developmental education courses before they can enroll in college-level courses. In 2007-08, 43 percent of Hispanic first-year undergraduates had taken a remedial course, compared to 31 percent of white students.<sup>190</sup> For too many students, research shows remedial course work can limit college completion.

## **A significant percentage of Latino adults enroll but do not complete a college degree.**

Enrolling in college is not a guarantee of college completion. Retention and satisfactory academic progress are also important components of college completion. In 2010, 13 percent of Latino adults (age 25 and over) had earned some credits in college but had not yet completed a degree or credential.<sup>191</sup> Several studies have shown the reasons why some students drop out of college without completing a degree include: increasing college costs, academic challenges, family responsibilities and/or institutional transfers.

## **Traditional graduation rates are low for Latino college students.**

The standard measures of college graduation rates are designed to reflect the time-bound completion of first-time, full-time students. About one in four (26 percent) Hispanic students seeking an associate degree earn their degrees within three years, compared to 29 percent of white students and 23 percent of black students.<sup>192</sup> When looking at students in bachelor's degree programs, 49 percent of Hispanics earn their degrees within six years, compared to 60 percent of whites and 42 percent of blacks.<sup>193</sup> Given that many Latino students are less likely to enroll as full-time students or may stop out in their college pathway, these rates may not accurately reflect the progress of the entire Latino student population.

### **There is a gap in college completion between Latino students and white students, as calculated by credentials per 100 FTE.**

The number of certificates, degrees and diplomas awarded per 100 full-time equivalent students (FTEs) gauges the degrees awarded relative to the number of students enrolled. The number of degrees awarded is divided by 100 FTEs; part-time students are aggregated to the full-time count of students to determine the combined metric. In 2007-08, the degree attainment of Latinos per 100 FTEs was about 15 percent, compared to 19 percent of whites, thus creating about a 4 percent equity gap between these two cohorts.<sup>194</sup>

### **There is a gap in college completion between Latino students and white students, as calculated by credentials relative to the population in need.**

The number of degrees produced per 1,000 residents with no degree measures the credentials earned relative to the population in need. In 2007-08, the degree attainment of Latinos per 1,000 adults compared to those 18 to 44 years old with no college degree was 15 percent, compared to 41 percent of whites. Therefore, the equity gap between these two cohorts was 26 percent.<sup>195</sup>

### **The number of degrees earned by Latinos has increased.**

The increase in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded nationally from 2005-06 to 2007-2008 was 6 percent. In these three years, Hispanics had the largest growth in undergraduate degrees earned by any racial/ethnic group with 12.5 percent (28,360 degrees). However, this measure may be the result of an increase in overall enrollment numbers rather than an increase in rates of completion.<sup>196</sup>

### **The educational attainment of Latino adults is lower than other racial/ethnic groups.**

In 2007-08, Hispanics earned 16 percent of certificates, 12 percent of associate degrees and 8 percent of bachelor's degrees awarded by degree-granting institutions. In 2008, Hispanics ages 25 to 34 years old in the United States were less likely to have earned a postsecondary degree (19.2 percent) than blacks (29.4 percent), whites (48.7 percent) and Asians (69.1 percent).<sup>197</sup> According to the Pew Hispanic Center, 6 percent of Hispanics ages 25 and over had earned an associate degree, while 13 percent had earned a bachelor's degree.<sup>198</sup>

# State Policy Approaches



**Low Cost**

## **Develop a state plan that includes strategies to ensure access to a quality postsecondary education and support to degree attainment.**

In **California**, the California Community Colleges launched a task force at the beginning of 2011 to boost completion rates over the next 10 years. The Board of Governors appointed 21 individuals to a Student Success Task Force that will meet regularly to develop a strategic blueprint to help community college students succeed to completion. The task force will examine strategies for promoting student success, including improving student assessment, delivering remedial instruction, increasing access to financial aid and academic counseling, and identifying national funding models to incentivize completion rates.

## **Require regular reporting in order to build state databases that track equity and success in degree attainment.**

In **Massachusetts**, the Board of Higher Education is mandated to develop a performance measurement system for state and community colleges. The performance measurement system consists of indicators in access, affordability, student success and cost-effective use of resources. The indicators are measured against a variety of benchmarks, including segmental, state, regional, national and longitudinal comparisons.





**Medium Cost**

### **Support student support programs.**

**California** State University has established an Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) whose primary goal is to improve access for low-income, first-generation and historically disadvantaged students with potential for academic success by making higher education a possibility. EOP provides a comprehensive program of support services that include, but are not limited to, recruitment, preadmission counseling, orientation, summer programs, diagnostic testing, financial aid follow-up, special admission, preintroductory instruction, academic advisement, tutoring, learning skill services, and personal, educational and career counseling. In 2006, Hispanic EOP students had a six-year persistence rate of 62 percent.



**High Cost**

### **Increase state support to colleges and universities that enroll large percentages of students from underrepresented groups.**

Just over half of Latino undergraduates were enrolled in about 260 institutions of higher education located in about 15 states and identified as Hispanic-serving institutions in 2007-08. This provides an opportunity to target limited resources to institutions enrolling the highest concentration of otherwise underserved students.

# Take Action

**1** Request information on educational attainment and graduation rates in the state, disaggregated for Latinos at the certificate, associate and bachelor's levels.

**2** Collect information on the number of adults, and Latino adults, with "some college" but who have not completed a degree, and develop a policy approach with public institutions to recapture these students to enroll and complete their degree.

**3** Examine the transfer policy in the state and determine its effectiveness by reviewing the transfer rates of students generally, and Latinos specifically.

**4** Determine the percentage and educational pattern of students who are required to take remedial/developmental education, and increase alignment with K-12 to improve college readiness for all students, including Latinos, in the state.

**5** Set a clear goal for college completion numbers in the state and work with stakeholders to articulate a plan for reaching the goal.

## Notes

188. National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2009; National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008.

189. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table 1. Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2010. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2010/tables.html>

190. U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics, 2010, Table 241 (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

191. U.S. Census Bureau, Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

192. U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics, 2010, Table 341.

193. The Condition of Education, 2010, Indicator 21.

194. Santiago, D., "Ensuring America's Future: Benchmarking Latino College Completion to Meet National Goals: 2010 to 2020" (Washington, DC: *Excelencia* in Education, 2010).

195. Ibid.

196. Ibid.

197. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2009.

198. Pew Hispanic Center, "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2009," Table 22.



Recommendation **Ten**

# Adult Education

**DIEZ**

## One

Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families

## Two

Improve middle and high school college and career counseling

## Three

Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs

## Four

Align the K–12 education system with international standards and college admission expectations

## Five

Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention

## Six

Clarify and simplify the admission process

## Seven

Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent

## Eight

Keep college affordable

## Nine

Dramatically increase college completion rates

## Ten

Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs

## Background

There are millions of low-skilled adults in the U.S., and there is a pressing need to focus more attention and resources on adult learners. Close to two-thirds of the projected workforce of 2020 are already out of elementary and secondary education, and following current trends, by 2025, the U.S. will fall short of the college graduates needed in the workforce. According to a recent study, the nation has been producing too few college-educated workers since 1980 and will need an additional 20 million workers with at least some postsecondary education over the next 15 years in order to meet future economic requirements and to reduce income inequality.<sup>199</sup>

While the Latino population is one of the youngest populations in the U.S. (with an average age of about 27, compared to whites, with an average age in the late 30s), there is still a significant and growing adult Latino population who could benefit from adult education programs to supplement skills and education. For example, almost 43 percent of Latinos age 25 and older have earned either a high school diploma or some college.<sup>200</sup> Creating opportunities for these adults to continue their education and complete a degree will help the nation increase its educated workforce and meet the needs of families and communities.

Adult Latino learners come from many different walks of life and approach educational opportunities at various times. Unlike many traditional students, adults typically have more outside responsibilities that compete with their time and ability to advance educationally. In addition, there is no single group of adult learners; they vary widely in age, have differing levels of academic readiness, come from different social and economic circumstances, and have varying levels of English language fluency. States need to make investments in systems designed to understand the needs of adult learners and support these students while they earn their degrees. However, in this difficult economic climate, numerous states are cutting back their investments in adult education rather than investing in the education of these adults.

# What Legislators Need to Know

To evaluate the state's college completion performance, legislators may want to seek answers to the following questions:

- What are the state's Latino education and workforce demographics?
- What percentage of the Latino adult population ages 25 and older is employed full time?
- What are the highest levels of postsecondary education among the state's Latino adult population?
- What percentage of Latino adults has earned a general education diploma (GED)?
- What state policies and programs support the education of adults? Do these programs meet the needs of Latino adults?

# Research

## **The educational attainment for Latino adults is low.**

Latino adult learners have varied educational attainment levels. In 2009, 39 percent of Hispanics ages 25 and older had not obtained a high school diploma. Also, only 26 percent of Hispanics in this same age group had obtained a high school diploma.<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, Latino adults have a lower college educational attainment than other groups (only 19 percent of Latino adults have earned an associate degree or higher).

## **Latino adult participation in adult education programs can be improved.**

Latino adult learners enroll in state-administered adult education programs at a lower rate (38 percent) than white adults (46 percent) or black adults (46 percent). However, Latino adults who were enrolled in adult education programs were more likely to be enrolled in a work-related course, while a small percentage (5 percent) were enrolled in a part-time degree or diploma program.<sup>202</sup>

## **Latino adults represent a small percentage of nontraditional-age students.**

Many Latino students are considered nontraditional; however, only a small percentage are considered nontraditional-age students (4 percent).<sup>203</sup> These are Hispanic students ages 25 and older who are enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

## **GED credentials can link adult students to postsecondary education.**

In 2009, about 39 percent of Hispanics ages 25 and over had not earned a high school diploma. This means many Latinos in the workforce do not have the educational preparation for higher education. In addition, many Latino students have parents who have not successfully navigated the U.S. education system. GED credentials offer an opportunity for Latino adults to prepare for college. New attention is being raised about the use of the GED credential as a bridge to postsecondary education. In fact, the American Council on Education has committed to an expansion of the GED and support services to increase the preparation for and access of GED test-takers to postsecondary education. The first-year report from their study indicated that college enrollees with GED credentials in institutions of up to two years made up nearly 78 percent of the 2003 cohort that passed the GED exam and who entered postsecondary education at any level.<sup>204</sup>





TN

# State Policy Approaches



**Low Cost**

## **Develop an accelerated outreach plan to engage Latinos who do not have a high school diploma, and develop strategies to encourage completion of a diploma or GED.**

A state's ability to work with a multitude of organizations, from the Department of Education to community colleges, private industry councils and community-based organizations that offer adult education programs could benefit parents by increasing their workforce opportunities, while also improving the information Latino parents receive and their efforts to engage in their children's education.

## **Offer credit for prior learning.**

As mentioned earlier, there are Latino adults with some college but who have not completed a degree. In addition, there are some who have been very active in the workforce without a college degree. In 2010, **Tennessee** approved a law that required the institutions of the University of Tennessee system and the Tennessee Board of Regents system to accommodate the efforts of students who are beyond traditional college age to complete a college degree by accepting completed course work and credits to the extent consistent with the institution's academic standards.



**Medium Cost**

### **Expand state tax incentives for employers to support their employees' education.**

Since the opportunity cost for attending college can be so high for many low-income Latino students, one way to encourage continued education is to provide state tax incentives to employers of students who are interested in continuing their education. This may help to offset some of the costs for students attending college and would ensure their employer's support to continue their education while working.

### **Provide funding for flexible learning environments.**

Western Governors University (WGU) is an online institution that offers a competency-based curriculum that allows for progress toward a degree based on real world competencies rather than number of credit hours enrolled. WGU differs from other online institutions in that the program is personalized to a student's schedule, allowing the student to learn independent of time or place, working around a student's duty to work and family.



**High Cost**

### **Implement a program that addresses the needs of adult students who need to balance work and education.**

In **Washington**, community and technical colleges have come together to form the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST), which pairs workforce training with adult basic education or English as a second language so that students learn both at the same time. The goal of I-BEST is to get students to complete a vocational certificate faster and to prepare them to transition into college-level programs. This is accomplished by requiring students to earn not only a vocational certificate but also to complete 45 college-level credits.

# Take Action

- 1** Understand the demographics of the workforce in the state and the educational attainment levels of this workforce, disaggregated by race/ethnicity.
- 2** Provide adequate investment in adult education programs and activities at the state policy level.
- 3** Encourage innovation in adult education programs that integrate language acquisition with skills development.
- 4** Support efforts by community colleges to expand outreach and services to the adult population.
- 5** Explore policy efforts to link the preparation of adults who have new GED credentials with aligned services to facilitate their access.

## Notes

199. Carnevale, A., and Rose, S.J., *The Undereducated American* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2011).

200. U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey, 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement*, Table 1. Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2010/tables.html>

201. Pew Hispanic Center, *Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2009*, Table 22 (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011).

202. U.S. Department of Education, *The Condition of Education 2007*, Indicator 10 (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

203. *Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2009*, Table 26.

204. Patterson, M., Zhang, J., Song, W., and Guison-Dowdy, A., *Crossing the Bridge: GED Credentials and Postsecondary Educational Outcomes*. (Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 2010).





**Excelencia In Education** accelerates Latino student success in higher education by linking research, policy, and practice and by promoting education policies and institutional practices that support Latino student achievement. *Excelencia* is building a network of results-oriented educators and policymakers to address the U.S. economy's need for a highly educated workforce and engaged civic leadership.

For further information, visit [www.edexcelencia.org](http://www.edexcelencia.org).

**National Council of La Raza (NCLR)** — the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States — works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. Through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations, NCLR reaches millions of Hispanics each year in 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. To achieve its mission, NCLR conducts applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy, providing a Latino perspective in five key areas — assets/investments, civil rights/immigration, education, employment and economic status, and health. In addition, it provides capacity-building assistance to its Affiliates who work at the state and local level to advance opportunities for individuals and families.

Founded in 1968, NCLR is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization headquartered in Washington, DC. NCLR serves all Hispanic subgroups in all regions of the country and has regional offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Phoenix, and San Antonio.

For further information, visit [www.nclr.org](http://www.nclr.org).

**The College Board** is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of more than 5,900 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT® and the Advanced Placement Program®. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators and schools.

For further information, visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).

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