



# ACCESS TO COMMON STANDARDS FOR ALL:

## An Advocacy Tool Kit for Supporting Success

**NCLR**  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA

The 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.

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# **ACCESS TO COMMON STANDARDS FOR ALL:**

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By David Castillo and Josef Lukan



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

David Castillo is a Program Associate for NCLR's Education component. Josef Lukan is a Policy Analyst for the Education and Children's Policy Project of the Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation (ORAL). The authors are grateful to Delia Pompa, Senior Vice President, Programs, for overseeing the development of this tool kit from start to finish. The authors also thank the entire ORAL team for lending their policy acumen in crafting this tool kit, especially Education Policy Analyst Erika Beltran and former NCLR's Education Project Coordinator Sarah Dolan. Finally, the authors thank Sheena K. Fallon, Copy Editor; Karen Nava, Director of Graphics and Publication; Kelly Isaac, Production Assistant and Graphic Designer; and Danica Petroschius and Ruth López of Penn Hill Group, who provided substantial editorial assistance throughout the entirety of this project.

This tool kit was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions presented here are those of the authors and NCLR alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the funder. Permission to copy, disseminate, or otherwise use information from this paper is granted, provided that appropriate credit is given to NCLR.

## INTRODUCTION

While education in the United States is often hailed as the great equalizer and the key to socioeconomic well-being, our education system is not adequately serving all students—particularly Latinos\* and English language learners (ELLs). Despite being a large and growing share of the U.S. student population, only 56% of Latino students graduate from high school on time with a regular diploma, compared to 77% of their White peers.<sup>1</sup> This fact undercuts the increasing demand in the U.S. for highly educated and trained individuals who can compete in the global economy. As a result, a disproportionate number of Latinos are left unprepared for college and unqualified for good jobs, and will not have the same opportunities to buy a house, afford health insurance, or pay for their children to go to college. It is no wonder that education reform is often labeled as one of the most critical civil rights issues of our day.

While pinpointing a solution has been difficult, one thing is clear: the reason the education system is subpar is that academic standards in this country are simply too low. In addition, low standards disproportionately affect Hispanics. A recent review of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which compares academic performance across states, found that those states with the greatest degree of variation between

NAEP scores and their own state test scores were largely in the South, Southwest, and Far West and have a disproportionate share of low-income, non-White, and ELL students.<sup>2</sup>

The Common Core State Standards Initiative, better known as “common standards,” is a voluntary, state-led initiative to establish a clear set of educational standards for K–12 English language arts and math. The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) believes that the common standards are key to improving education for Latino students and part of the solution.

“Education is the key to our long-term economic prosperity. But education is more than an economic issue. It’s the civil rights issue of our generation. If you can ride at the front of a bus, but you cannot read, you are not truly free.”

—Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, Lecture at Harvard University, October 15, 2010.

The voice of the Latino community is critical to ensuring that policymakers implement common standards in a way that truly improves education for Latino students. This tool kit is designed to help education reform champions build stronger, more effective strategies to ensure educational success for Latino and ELL students and their families. It contains resources that are designed to guide organizations through the steps toward

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The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is an exam administered nationally and which is internationally benchmarked. The test covers math, reading, writing, and science; results are released as “The Nation’s Report Card,” since it is administered uniformly across the nation to participating students.

\* 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.

effective advocacy on these issues. It also includes a number of templates and examples which can be adapted to reflect specific priorities and interests.

There is also information on how to frame a specific issue, how to identify partners and an advocacy audience, ideas for taking action, and an entire section on media tools and resources. This tool kit includes many sample documents, tips, and pointers for developing an education advocacy strategy.

Shaping policy to reflect the needs of the Latino community can only be achieved by engaging parents and other community members. A strong voice is essential to guaranteeing the success of Hispanic children in communities throughout the country. We hope this tool kit will be a useful resource, either for continuing an existing effort or embarking on a new journey!



## THE PROMISE OF COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

In order to achieve the promise of common standards, students need access to a rigorous curriculum and highly effective teachers to develop college- and career-readiness skills and reverse the downward spiral of academic outcomes for many Latino students. While it may take time for every state to reach high standards—especially in places where student achievement is low relative to the current standards—raising the bar now will catalyze further changes, which would result in higher student achievement in the classroom. Improving each of the key educational

system elements will ensure that Latino students graduate from high school equipped to succeed in college or in the career of their choice.

### Challenges and Barriers for Latino Students

There are key elements that need to be improved before the benefits of common standards are realized. As indicated previously, Latinos are dropping out of school in high numbers, and those who do graduate are not prepared for college or work. Although there are many factors contributing to low levels of student achievement, some of the challenges Latino students face are:

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### How Did We Get Here?

Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—the major federal K–12 education law—states are required to set their own standards and are held accountable for making sure their students meet these standards. This law has created an incentive for some states to set low standards and has led to what U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan calls a “race to the bottom.” This system has also put American students at a disadvantage by allowing for widespread variability in quality and rigor. Studies have shown that not only are there major differences among standards between states, but also that nearly all state standards are inadequate in what students should know and be able to do in today’s economy.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative seeks to change this. Common standards are designed to ensure that all students graduating from high school are prepared to succeed in college and in the global economy.

States banded together in this effort because they recognized the potential that a clear set of shared high standards holds for their students. Raising standards across the board means that all children are being held to the same high expectations no matter where they live, increasing the likelihood that all students will graduate prepared for college and work. Common standards will also replace academic standards that are often too lengthy and complex to understand. Under the initiative, states will also have the opportunity to “individualize” 15% of the new standards to address state and local priorities. The new common standards are also straightforward and short, which makes them more easily understood by parents. If parents know what is expected of their students, they are more likely to be engaged in their children’s education. One set of standards will allow for common assessments, which can be developed where appropriate, creating economies of scale that will make these tools easier and more cost-effective to produce and distribute across the nation.

- **Highly segregated and high-poverty schools.** In 2008, nearly half of Hispanic and Black students (46% and 44%, respectively) in urban areas attended a high-poverty school, while fewer than 10% of their White peers attended such schools.<sup>3</sup>
- **Lack of access to effective teachers.** For example, in California, about 16% of the teachers in schools attended by Hispanic students are not fully credentialed, which is twice the percentage for schools predominantly attended by White students.<sup>4</sup>
- **Linguistic barriers.** Forty-three percent of first-generation Latino children, 21% of second generation, and 5% in the third generation or higher are not fluent in English.<sup>5</sup>
- **Limited support in the native language.** Nationwide, 31% of ELL high school students have teachers who do not have a major, minor, or certification in the field of bilingual education.<sup>6</sup>
- **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.<sup>7</sup>

### Addressing the Needs of Latino Students

As momentum builds around the common standards across the country, the timing is ripe for policymakers and advocates to address the challenges that Latino students face. In order to truly support Hispanic student achievement, policymakers must address the key educational elements as they relate to the Latino community, which include:

#### *Access to effective teachers*

- Schools and districts should measure teacher effectiveness based on student academic progress.
- School districts should provide professional development, training, and technical assistance for *all* teachers—regardless of the subject matter—to meet the needs of Latinos and ELLs.
- Schools of education should invest in programs to grow the pool of highly qualified bilingual teachers and personnel with expertise in working with Latinos and ELLs.
- School and district administrators should invest in principal and teacher recruitment that diversifies the nation's principal and teacher pool.
- Local school districts should promote the development of principals and teachers from the community by creating a pipeline that draws from sources such as teacher aides and current high school students.

***Access to rigorous curriculum and effective instructional strategies aligned to high standards***

- Schools must ensure that *all* students enroll in rigorous courses (which may include Advanced Placement [AP] or International Baccalaureate [IB] classes).
- Schools and districts should integrate student supports that utilize both in-school and community-based services.
- Teachers should use instructional practices designed to meet the needs of diverse learners such as reflexive learning and culturally competent learning techniques.
- Education leaders must make informed decisions regarding student eligibility for services in special education, services for ELLs, college preparatory curriculum, and gifted and talented programs based on legally and educationally valid criteria.

***Tests that accurately show what students know***

- Tests must be valid and reliable.
- Tests must be aligned to high standards and curriculum.
- Students, especially ELLs, should have access to the testing accommodations they need, and teachers must receive training on the use of accommodations.
- Policymakers and school leaders should support research and investment in appropriate assessment instruments for ELLs, including native- and dual-language assessments for students in bilingual programs.
- Tests must be developed that are appropriate for ELL students.

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Advanced Placement (AP) courses are college-level courses that a student can take in high school. Typically, the school offers these courses to students who are in the honors program or who have completed all of the high school courses available in the subject. These courses tend to be math and English, although they can be offered in virtually any subject.

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is an international educational foundation headquartered in Switzerland. IB offers three educational programs for children ages 3–19. It works with governments and education agencies to develop international education classes and rigorous assessment tests.

***Effective family and community  
engagement strategies***

- School leaders must engage parents in helping to develop effective outreach strategies for Latino, immigrant, ELL, and geographically isolated families to ensure equitable access to services.
- Policymakers should invest in programs that enhance parents' capacity to advocate for their children's education and development.
- District and school administrators as well as teachers should provide educational information in a language and format that parents can understand.

## HOW TO USE THIS TOOL KIT\*

This tool kit is designed to help grassroots advocates develop an advocacy plan from start to finish. It presents concepts and ideas that have been used in successful advocacy strategies and provides several tools and references to help support your efforts. Although the structure of the tool kit follows a particular order, you should feel free to dive into any section. We recognize that every organization is unique and that some parts of this tool kit may be more relevant to your work than others.

### *How Do You Advocate?*

Ultimately, the purpose of engaging in advocacy is to improve people's lives, empower communities, and effect change. Advocacy is an activity that anyone can be engaged in and has a lasting impact. This tool kit follows seven basic steps for designing your own advocacy strategy. By following these steps, you will be well on your way to

becoming a strong advocate for young Latino children and their families!

**Step 1:** Define the problem.

**Step 2:** Define your desired outcome.

**Step 3:** Identify your partners and targets.

**Step 4:** Develop an action plan.

**Step 5:** Map out your resources and needs.

**Step 6:** Take action!

**Step 7:** Evaluate.

You will find elements of each of these steps throughout this tool kit. Section I reviews how to identify and frame your problem and solution and presents questions to consider in developing each. Section II coincides with Step 3, providing steps to build a strong coalition and unified voice. Moreover, it walks you through how to identify your advocacy target. Section III covers how to take action and plan an effective strategy. Section IV presents a number of different ways to engage the media in your action plan.

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## What is Advocacy?

"Advocacy represents the strategies devised, actions taken, and solutions proposed to influence decision-making at the local and state levels to create positive change for people and their environment."<sup>†</sup>

Empowering the Latino community to engage in advocacy efforts may include:

- Educating constituencies on political power structures and how they can influence them (helping people understand their role in changing/building power)
- Informing constituencies about specific public policy issues
- Engaging clients in the organization's advocacy efforts
- Prioritizing advocacy issues to match the capacity and interest of the organization

<sup>†</sup> Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Prevention Resources, "Advocacy & Action—What is Advocacy?" <http://wch.uhs.wisc.edu/11-Action/11-Action-01WhatIsIt.html> (accessed June 2009).

\* Adapted from: Erika Beltran and Sarah Dolan, *New Leaders, New Directions: Tools for Advancing an Early Childhood Agenda for the Latino Community* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2009).

Although we do not cover it in this tool kit, Step 7, Evaluate, is an indispensable part of any advocacy strategy. Talking to legislators and policymakers about proper implementation of common standards is important, but how do you know your action plan worked? Did you reach the right targets? How will you advocate even more effectively next time? These are critical questions to answer as you continue revising and refining your strategy. For further information on how to structure your evaluation process, you can consult *Build Your Advocacy Grantmaking: Advocacy Capacity Assessment Tool & Advocacy Evaluation Tool* by the Alliance for Justice and *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy* by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. A free online tool to help with your entire strategy is the Advocacy Progress Planner, which can be found at [www.planning.continuousprogress.org](http://www.planning.continuousprogress.org). Use it in conjunction with this guide to develop a stellar strategy!

## SECTION I: FRAMING THE ISSUE

The first step in developing an effective advocacy strategy is to identify both the problem and a potential solution to fix the problem. An important part of this process is framing your issue in a compelling way. This section provides guidance that helps you do just that. It discusses various problems in education by outlining the four major elements of the education system that are important for academic success but have not served Latino and ELL students well. This section is followed by a list of questions you should ask in order to help you determine the right solution to help fix the problem you have identified.

Every community will have a variety of local, state, and federal policies and practices that affect how well the common core state standards are implemented and thus how well these policies address current problems in education. Although there is great variation in these policies, advocates must be prepared to examine them and how they policies impact the Latino community. In some cases, the effects on the community will be quite obvious for advocates, but in other cases, asking the right questions will help uncover more issues.

Moreover, every community will have a variety of different people that are engaged in the discussion about how common standards can help improve education in the state, district, and school. Section II of this tool kit describes how to identify coalition

partners and your audience to help you achieve your goals. Many organizations first choose to identify their partners and then develop and define their advocacy issue.

Your organization may already be part of a coalition, or you may be the trailblazer doing work on issues related to common core state standards. Regardless, your strategy can start here or with Section II!

### Identifying and Framing the Problem

Policy analysis, although a seemingly technical term, is a relatively simple tool that every advocate should understand and be able to use. Policy analysis involves assessing how to improve public policies by considering their effects on communities, agencies, and, in this case, students and families. The first step in analyzing policy effectively is to identify the problem. It is simple to do this for common standards. The problem is that the key elements of our education system are less than adequate in how they meet the needs of Latino students. Academic standards are the backbone of the education system. Thus, changing standards means that all elements of the education system must change in order to align to the new standards. This presents an opportunity to improve those key elements. Each of the following education system elements is then followed by questions you should ask to help determine how to develop your advocacy strategy.

#### ***Element 1: Alignment of Curricula and Instruction with High Standards***

The way to ensure students are ready

to meet the new and higher standards is through curriculum and instruction. Appropriate learning materials must be available to all students who will be subjected to higher performance standards. Teachers must also be given the time and resources needed to learn the new curriculum and adjust their teaching styles if necessary.



Questions to consider:

- How will student assessments be aligned to the common standards?
- Will students be tested on material that goes beyond the common standards?
- States that adopt the common standards will be able to add up to 15% of their own standards to address local and state priorities. Will our state choose to develop additional standards? If so, how are the additional standards going to be developed?
- Is cultural and linguistic relevance going to be considered when developing the additional standards?
- How will my school be held accountable if students are not meeting these standards?

### ***Element 2: Appropriate Test Use***

States must work to improve tests so that they are able to truly measure what a student knows. This is especially true for ELLs as many states have been using inappropriate assessments and accommodations for testing them. Similarly, the tests used to measure student performance must also be in line with the curriculum to ensure that they accurately measure student learning.



Questions to consider:

- How will states ensure that ELLs are being taught to the same high quality standards and that the tests used to measure their performance are appropriate?
- What additional supports will be put in place for ELLs to meet the new higher standards?
- If common English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards are developed, will our state participate?
- Will our state's ELP standards be aligned to the common core English language arts standards?

### ***Element 3: Effective Teachers***

Policymakers and administrators must embrace policies that grow the teacher workforce and provide intensive preparation and ongoing professional development to ensure that teachers 1) know how to incorporate the new standards as they develop instructional strategies, 2) are able to effectively teach students with unique instructional needs, such as ELLs, while simultaneously teaching rigorous academic content, and 3) are successful in helping all children meet the common core state standards. If this is done correctly, teachers will have the skills to teach the new curriculum to Latino and ELL students and make good use of test results.



Questions to consider:

- What resources will be put in place to develop the capacity of teachers to deliver this instruction?



- What additional support will teachers and students receive to reach these higher standards?
- Are teachers and school administrators going to be given extra training to ensure that they know how the common core state standards are aligned to current state standards and other professional development that may be necessary?
- What kinds of measurements (e.g., student achievement, required hours of professional development, portfolios, evaluations) will be developed to determine a teacher's effectiveness?
- What will principals and teachers do differently when the standards are in place in order to foster active parent and community participation?
- How will school districts work with parents and community leaders to help them become advocates for high academic standards?

After asking these questions, determine which of these educational elements is most relevant and in urgent need of improvement in your community. Consider the following questions to help you identify the most pressing issue:

- How do I know that this is a problem? What is the evidence?
- Is the problem specific and concrete rather than abstract?
- How many children and families are affected by this issue?
- Where is the biggest disparity? For example, lack of teacher training (professional development) could be the largest factor contributing to ineffective teaching or low student achievement.
- Which issue will lend itself to garnering the most community support?
- Where are we most likely to succeed?

#### ***Element 4: Active Parent and Community Participation***

Although most education reform advocates agree that parents and communities should be more involved in helping students learn, school districts and schools have not done enough to increase parental engagement in the Latino community. Along with raising standards, policymakers and administrators should provide information in a language and format that parents and community members understand as well as develop systems that build the capacity of families to engage in their children's education.



Questions to consider:

- What type of information should parents and communities expect from schools, administrators, and teachers when the implementation process is taking place?

### **Identifying and Framing the Solution**

Now that you have identified the problem and a goal, it's time to pinpoint a solution! A solution is a way of getting to the goals you have set for

yourself. In this case, your goal is to ensure that education officials improve the key elements of the educational system mentioned in the last section. Identifying a solution is often a process that involves considering the political realities of your issue, the timing, and the possible consequences of your actions. Many organizations develop a strategic solution to an issue by working together with coalition partners or others who are interested in these issues. We encourage you to do the same!

Questions to consider:

- What do you want to accomplish? Clearly define your desired outcome. For example: “We want to see reform of the key education elements included in the implementation of common standards.”

- What do you want in the short-term?
- What do you want in the long-term?
- Is there a window of opportunity? A window of opportunity is a short period of time during which it is particularly advantageous to take action. It is usually the ideal timing for leveraging resources. Oftentimes, these opportunities can be a significant part of developing a solution. Below is a list of questions to consider in determining whether or not there is a window of opportunity for your issue:

- Has something happened in the media or in the environment that brings this issue to the forefront in a way it was not before?
- Will policymakers or community leaders soon make a particular decision that will directly impact your issue?
- Are there other groups or coalitions mobilizing around a related issue?
- Is there an influential individual who is available to help carry your message?
- What is the range of outcomes between winning and losing?
  - What are you willing to compromise on?
  - What can you live with? What is an acceptable outcome?
  - What can't you live with? What is an unacceptable outcome?

Once you have developed your solution, consider the following questions:

- Is your proposed solution achievable?
- Can the change you want really happen? Is it realistic?
- Is there an early objective you can work toward that is relatively easy to accomplish?
- What might we lose in the process and what compromises are you willing to make?

- What are the political risks?  
The organizational risks?
- Who will be your friends? Who  
will become your enemies?
- Will you gain or lose influence  
and power?

## Crafting Your Message

The next step in crafting your advocacy agenda is to present your issue and solution in a compelling manner. In order to get the attention of key policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels, your advocacy strategy has to tell a convincing story. One of the most effective ways to present your issue is to provide specific information about a family, a program, or a community. The more details you include, the more the issue comes to life for others. Please see the list of additional resources and tools at the end of this section for more ideas on how to present your message in a compelling manner.

### *Using the Right Framework*

Advocates of common standards have used the college-readiness frame to convince policymakers that proper implementation is critical to student success. For example, one of NCLR's messages is that common standards alone will not close the achievement gap. Students also need a variety of resources including effective teachers, access to a rigorous curriculum, adequate facilities, and a suitable environment for learning in order to be adequately prepared for college. Here are some other frames to consider:

**College Readiness.** Proper implementation will create the

circumstances necessary for students to be college-ready.

**Equality/Civil Rights.** Latino children should have access to the same quality instruction no matter where they live.

**Inclusion.** High quality standards must reflect the diverse needs of the student population.

### **Future Workforce/Economic**

**Development.** Studies have shown that reducing the dropout rate may result in significant future savings.

## Resources and Tools to Advance Your Advocacy Agenda

Communicating your key issue and solution is just as important as developing it. Every advocate should be equipped with information and data to help support his or her argument. For example, it is important for advocates to know what the Latino graduation rate is or how many Latino students enroll in college or university. Having such information readily available or memorized will help you be more persuasive in your messaging. Moreover, your organization should develop a position statement and talking points so that your messages are clear, concise, and consistent. Lastly, any kinds of resources, such as one-pagers or fact sheets that you can develop about your specific issue, will help carry your message further. Take a look at the possibilities!

### *Data Collection*

Depending on the message you use, you will want to collect data to reflect the urgency of your key policy issue and the strength of your proposed solution. Depending on your approach,

data collection could include collecting stories from families, documenting the needs of local Hispanic students, or providing state or federal demographic information to help make your case.

Appendix A has additional resources on data collection, and here are some other ideas to consider along the way:

***Ideas for small-scale data collection***

- Document the needs and challenges of one school in your community. Be sure to include the number of students, families, etc.
- Interview families and collect their stories.
- Have parents and/or students write their own stories related to your key issue.

***Ideas for large-scale data collection***

- Collect information on Latino students, including:
  - General demographic information of minority communities
  - High school graduation rates
  - College enrollment rates
  - Test scores

- Collect information on the level of rigor in coursework, including:
  - Number of Hispanic students enrolled in AP classes and percentage of those who pass the AP tests
  - Variety of advanced learning or college preparatory classes available in school districts
  - Number of Latinos enrolled in dual-credit college courses
- Collect information on schools and communities, including:
  - Types of instruction for ELLs (e.g., native language, dual-language, bilingual, English-immersion)
  - Types of support for parents (e.g., adult education services, family literacy, English as a Second Language, and General Education Diploma courses)
  - Outreach strategies to Latino communities

*Here is an example of data collection:*

### **Profile of K–12 Latino Students**

Data consistently show that Latino student achievement lags behind that of their White peers. Many Latino students simply do not have access to the resources and tools they need to be successful in school. The data below provide a snapshot of U.S. Latino students.

**Demographic Characteristics.** The dramatic growth of the Latino population throughout the United States has had a sizable impact on the demographic makeup of our country's students. Student data indicate that:

- Hispanic children now constitute nearly (22%) of all school-age children in the U.S.<sup>8</sup>
- The vast majority (91%) of Latinos under the age of 18 are U.S. citizens.<sup>9</sup>
- Two-fifths (40%) of Latino students are ELLs.<sup>10</sup>

**Socioeconomic Characteristics.** Young Latino students share many characteristics that put them at risk for school failure. Data indicate that:

- Fewer than 36% of Hispanic children ages three to five living in poverty were enrolled in early childhood care and education programs in the 2005–06 school year. In contrast, 45% of White and 65% of Black children of the same age group living below the federal poverty threshold\* were enrolled in these programs.
- Forty-six percent of Latino elementary students are enrolled in a high-poverty school.<sup>11</sup>
- Forty-four percent of Hispanic high school students are enrolled in a high-poverty school.<sup>12</sup>
- Thirty-two percent of children living in poverty are Latino.<sup>13</sup>
- Seventy-five percent of Latino students attend segregated schools in which students of color make up 50% or more of the student population.<sup>14</sup>
- One out of every nine Latino students attends a school where 99% to 100% of the student body is composed of minority students.<sup>15</sup>
- Latinos and African Americans make up 80% of the student population in extreme-poverty schools where 90% to 100% of the population is considered low-income.<sup>16</sup>

**School Indicators.** Latino students enter school already well behind their White peers and complete high school in lower numbers. Several studies documenting this important finding reveal that:

- Early Head Start reaches only 3% of all eligible Latino families, leaving many Hispanic families without services.<sup>17</sup>

\* For a family of four, the U.S. Census Bureau defines the federal poverty threshold as a total family income of less than \$22,207.

*(example continued)*

- By the fourth grade, a mere 14% of Latinos read at levels proficient or above, according to the NAEP.<sup>18</sup>
- Only 6% of Black and 7% of Hispanic students complete calculus, as compared to 16% of White students. In addition, while 20% of White high school students complete advanced science courses, only 12% of Blacks and 13% of Hispanics complete these courses.<sup>19</sup>
- African American and Hispanic twelfth graders, on average, read at approximately the same level as White eighth graders.<sup>20</sup>
- Only 55.5% of Hispanic students and 53.7% of Black students who entered ninth grade completed the twelfth grade and graduated with a regular high school diploma, as compared to 76.6% of White students.<sup>21</sup>

### **Position Statements**

Position statements are key to ensuring that your message is clear. They are what most policymakers and advocates reference to help them understand your message and the reasons behind your advocacy efforts. You have already gone through the most basic steps in creating your policy position by identifying your issue, solution, and framework. Now all you have to do is pull all of these pieces together. Of course, the length of this statement is completely up to you!

*Here's an example of an NCLR position statement on No Child Left Behind:*

### **NCLR's Position**

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) believes that English language learners (ELLs) must be included in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act's system of assessment and accountability. Prior to enactment of NCLB, ELLs received little attention from the education community, other than from the Title VII directors and other bilingual education advocates. NCLB has raised the visibility of ELLs among policymakers and educators.

NCLR believes that including ELLs in NCLB's assessment and accountability system can reverse negative trends and conditions that affect ELL student achievement and can ensure that ELLs leave high school prepared to compete for seats at the nation's top colleges. For example:

Properly supported and implemented, NCLB encompasses high expectations for ELLs, the appropriate use of assessments to measure and improve their levels of achievement, increased accountability and resources for school systems serving ELLs, and a greater role for the community in ensuring that these components are in place. However, important questions of policy and practice remain which must be answered to fulfill the promise of NCLB for ELLs.

**Talking Points**

Talking points are essential for messaging to policymakers. They are the highlights of the message and should be used when conducting interviews and talking with decision-makers or other advocates. Talking points are also very useful for those folks who are uncomfortable speaking in public. The key to talking points is to keep them interesting, convincing, and concise! Think of them as your 30-second elevator speech that you should be prepared to share at any moment.

**Here are some more tips:**

- Keep it simple.
- Stay on message.
- Make it interesting and compelling.
- Tailor your talking points to different audiences.

**You can use these sample talking points on common standards in your own messaging!**

**College-Readiness Talking Points**

- The Common Core State Standards Initiative is an effort to develop higher academic standards that can help make students college-ready and prepare them for life after graduating from high school.
- Until now, standards varied widely from state to state; a recent study of current state standards found not just a wide variance in academic standards, but also that most states had the same level of low standards.
- Some states have very low standards, which lead to low expectations.

- The Common Core State Standards Initiative presents an opportunity to align curriculum and instructional strategies to common standards, which should lead to classroom improvement.
- Curriculum and assessments are not always aligned to the state standards and therefore do not measure what a student knows or should know.

**Equity in Education Talking Points**

- Students of color are disproportionately affected by low academic standards.
- With fifty different sets of standards, what students are expected to learn, as well as their achievement, can vary widely between states.
- Common standards create a new opportunity to provide a high-quality education to all students, regardless of where they live.
- The current system of setting standards puts American students, especially students of color, at a disadvantage, and it needs to be redesigned.
- More than 80% of Black, Latino, Asian American, and Native students live in a state that has adopted common standards.

**Economic Impact Talking Points**

- Common standards will help states and school districts save money in curriculum and test development.



- One set of academic standards allows for education agencies to band together, develop, and distribute curricula and tests in a more cost-effective way.
- If half of the Latino students who dropped out of high school in the Los Angeles metropolitan area would have graduated in 2008, this graduating class would have earned an additional annual combined income of \$324.7 million. This would have likely produced an increase of \$228.3 million in spending and \$85.1 million in investment.
- A national report found that if the performance gap between Black and Hispanic students and White students had closed between 1983 and 1998, the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008 would have been between \$310 billion and \$525 billion higher, or 2% to 4% of GDP.
- If America's low-performing states performed on par with high-performing states on the NAEP, the United States in 2008 would have had \$425 billion to \$700 billion higher economic output, or 3% to 5% of GDP.

### **Story Banks/Collections\***

One of the most compelling ways to frame your issue is to collect stories about Latino students who have benefited from high standards. Many high-profile decision-makers do not often hear about how effective internationally benchmarked standards can be; thus, they fail to realize their impact on different communities.

Below are a few tips for collecting and sharing your stories:

- Interview students who are either currently taught to high standards or who want to be challenged more.
- Develop one-page or one-paragraph summaries of their stories (make sure to get the parents' permission before sharing). These stories can be about:
  - A success story of a student who, because of high academic standards, has graduated and enrolled in a university and done well with college coursework
  - The quality of their school's curriculum
  - A story about a great teacher in your community
  - A description of a high-quality program in your community
  - What parents would like to see changed about how their children are taught and evaluated
  - What parents and students think of when they hear "high academic standards" and how they think it could prepare them for the future



*Here is an example of a story:*

"I am from Guatemala and I have four daughters. I came to this country 11 years ago with very little education and, even worse, I didn't know a word of English or how the U.S. education system worked. When my oldest daughter, Marisol, started school here, she was placed in classes that did little to challenge her and she quickly grew bored with what she was learning. She always did well on her school work and tests, but when it came time to apply for college, Marisol discovered that she was unprepared. The community college she decided to attend told her she would need to enroll in remedial classes for both math and English. It was heartbreaking for both of us—not to mention the money we had to pay for these classes that resulted in no credit for Marisol. I was determined not to let that happen to my other daughters. When my next oldest daughter, Kimberly, entered middle school, she was placed in an algebra class, so when she was in high school she was able to take high-level math courses. Kimberly had to actively seek out these classes and thankfully they were challenging enough to prepare her for college. Unfortunately, the simple truth is that there are not a lot of challenging classes at our school and most students have the same type of experience as Marisol."

**One-Pagers**

One-page fact sheets, or one-pagers, are handy documents that advocates can bring anywhere. Most organizations have a variety of different one-pagers that highlight their advocacy work, research, or policy positions on different issues. Whether you are talking with policymakers or parents, one-pagers offer a simple means for others to reference your work.

Elements of a good one-pager:

- Much like talking points, a one-pager should be straightforward.
- Make it concise and compelling.
- Use the data you have collected to create information-rich, yet simple one-pagers.
  - Graphs
  - Charts

Consider the following ideas for creating your own:

- Use a parent's story to convey the importance of high academic standards.
- Highlight the diversity of the Latino community in your programs.
- Describe the implications of low academic standards, using a particularly low-performing school as an example.

**NCLR**  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA

2007

# FACT SHEET

## The “DREAM Act” and the “American Dream Act”

### Background

Every year, U.S. high schools graduate approximately 65,000 immigrant students. Brought to this country as young children, they have grown up in American K-12 schools and share our culture and values. Like their U.S.-born peers, they dream of pursuing higher education. Unfortunately, due to their immigration status, they are barred from the opportunities that make a college education affordable – in-state tuition rates, state and federal grants and loans, most private scholarships, and the ability to legally work their way through college. In effect, they are denied the opportunity to share in the American Dream. If passed, the “Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act,” S. 774, a bipartisan federal proposal led by Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL), Chuck Hagel (R-NE), and Richard Lugar (R-IN), would facilitate access to college for immigrant students in the U.S. by restoring states’ rights to offer in-state tuition to immigrant students residing in their state. The “DREAM Act” would also provide a path to citizenship for hardworking immigrant youth who were brought to the U.S. as young children and to pursuing higher education or military service, enabling them to contribute fully to our society. Representatives Howard Berman (D-CA), Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL), and Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) introduced a similar proposal, the “American Dream Act,” H.R. 1275, in the U.S. House of Representatives.

### What Do These Bills Do?

The “DREAM Act” and “American Dream Act” **restore states’ rights to determine residency for in-state tuition.** The “DREAM Act” would repeal Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), a federal provision requiring any state that provides in-state tuition rates to undocumented immigrants to provide the same tuition rate to out-of-state residents. Section 505, therefore, discourages many states from offering in-state tuition rates to undocumented students wishing to attend postsecondary institutions in the states in which they reside. Repealing this provision would restore a state’s right to determine criteria for higher education benefits for state residents.

The “DREAM Act” and “American Dream Act” **provide an opportunity for U.S.-raised students to earn U.S. citizenship.** The “DREAM Act” would allow certain immigrant students to adjust their status to that of a legal permanent resident on a conditional basis for six years based on the following requirements:

- ▶ **Age.** Immigrant students must have entered the U.S. before age 16.
- ▶ **Academic requirement.** Students must have been accepted for admission into a two- or four-year institution of higher education or have earned a high school diploma or a general educational development (GED) certificate at the time of application for relief.
- ▶ **Long-term U.S. residence.** Students must reside in the U.S. when the law is enacted. In addition, those eligible must have lived in the U.S. for at least five years preceding the date of enactment of the Act.
- ▶ **Good moral character.** Immigrant students must demonstrate good moral character, a defined term in immigration law. In general, students must have no criminal record.

[www.nclr.org](http://www.nclr.org)

## SECTION II: IDENTIFYING YOUR PARTNERS AND TARGETS

### Building a Coalition

High academic standards alone will not result in higher student achievement. A variety of resources must be in place to help students reach the higher standards, including effective teachers, equitable access to rigorous curricula, and high-quality educational environments. Making sure this happens, however, often requires a concerted effort from many interested parties—a coalition. The civil rights community came together in an effort to make sure those resources were there and to ensure that the larger common standards movement considered the needs of students of color each step of the way. As the numbers of Latino children continue to increase and make up a larger share of the U.S. child population, it is imperative that Hispanic-serving providers and leaders represent the needs of this community. This section of the tool kit is intended to assist you in building and establishing strong partnerships and coalitions to advance a common standards implementation advocacy agenda that meets the needs of Latino students.

#### **What is a Coalition?\***

Coalitions are groups of independent organizations that join together for information-sharing, advocacy, or other cooperative activities ranging from research to service delivery. They are an increasingly important vehicle for accomplishing positive community

change. The most powerful effort that today's advocates can undertake to effect change is to build a coalition of people and groups in their communities who are sympathetic to their point of view. By approaching, and then convincing, potential partners to join together to work for a common goal, the advocates gain a coalition whose combined strength will provide them with greater opportunities to reach out and spread their message to the public.

#### **Why Form a Coalition?**

Coalitions are typically formed to increase influence and build political power, or to meet one or more of the following needs:

- **To accomplish a specific advocacy goal**, where the efforts of individual advocacy agencies are likely to be less effective than a unified community voice in support of or in opposition to a particular policy, program, or action.
- **To share information or ideas** so that all coalition members are better informed about important issues or programs, such as new proposals to require state and local police to enforce federal immigration laws.
- **To decrease isolation and increase collaboration**, enabling organizations that cannot easily carry out specific activities by themselves to participate indirectly through the coalition's activities.
- **To reduce staff and other costs** for accomplishing a common goal by sharing work and responsibilities.

\* Adapted from *State and Local Police Enforcement of Federal Immigration Laws* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2006).

The effectiveness of a coalition depends to a considerable degree on the organizational skills, commitment, interest, and contributions of time and effort of its members. Even fully staffed coalitions are rarely effective unless they are bound by commitment, shared interests, and priorities sufficient enough to ensure ongoing participation by a significant portion of its members. A coalition is likely to survive if it proves effective enough that there is a positive return on the time and other resources invested. Thus, a coalition that successfully supports or opposes legislation or regulations, or accomplishes other agreed-upon objectives, is likely to survive and grow.

### ***Characteristics of Effective Coalitions\****

#### **Clearly Defined Purpose and Scope.**

Goals, objectives, and strategies are made clear and understandable. The coalition does not try to do everything; instead, it has a clear focus. The coalition may suffer or become ineffective if some members wish to broaden the scope to include other issues.

**Coordination.** Legislators, policymakers, and educational leaders need to repeatedly hear from many groups, but when time and resources are limited, a “divide and conquer” strategy may work better than focusing everyone’s efforts on the same lawmaker. Additionally, coalition members should share resources such as legislative alerts, newsletters, and other advocacy materials.

**Networking.** Although you may not know anyone who can get your senators on the phone, perhaps one

of your coalition partners does. If you are working together, this contact can speak for the entire coalition (if everyone agrees) rather than just for one group.

**Unified Messaging.** Typically, coalitions do not take positions that are bound to be divisive because these positions may pit the interests of some coalition members against others.

**Cooperation.** Visit district officials, legislators, and other policymakers as a coalition to demonstrate a “united front.” When appropriate, you may also want to draft a coalition letter that each member or organization signs.

**Expansion.** Continually seek out other groups who share the coalition’s concerns and positions on the issues. Encourage them to join your coalition.

**Resource Allocation.** One group cannot do all of the work or supply all of the resources. Allow groups with limited financial resources to make in-kind contributions.

As you can see, there are many good reasons to start or join a coalition. Coalitions give advocates greater collective power because there is strength in numbers! For the common standards movement, it is especially important that Latino-serving organizations participate in coalitions. Often, if we are not actively participating, our voices and concerns are not heard.

\* Adapted from *State and Local Police Enforcement of Federal Immigration Laws* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2006).

### ***To-Do List Before Joining or Forming a Coalition\****

**Ensure that participation reflects the priorities of coalition partners:**

- Know what your role in the coalition will be: leader, partner in messaging and strategic decision-making, information dissemination, etc.
- Consider the resource allocation—is every coalition equal in its contribution of time, staffing, and materials development?

**Once you are ready to join a coalition, ask some key questions:**

- What does my organization bring to the coalition?
- What benefits do we gain by joining?
- How can we build relationships through this coalition?
- What are the downsides of joining the coalition?



Questions to consider:

- Who are your constituents?
  - Who is directly impacted by this issue? They are your primary constituents or primary beneficiaries.
  - Is solving the problem important to a lot of people or just a few? Who else is interested in this issue? Have you asked them to work with you?

■ Who else will benefit?

- Sometimes the people who will benefit may be different than the people who are your constituents or direct beneficiaries. They are your secondary constituents or beneficiaries.
- Have you asked the secondary beneficiaries to work with you to develop a solution?
- Are there nontraditional partners that you have not considered yet? Some examples might include:
  - Parents
  - Health care professionals, law enforcement officials, and other professionals
  - Community-based and faith-based organizations
  - Business leaders
  - Labor unions

■ It is always a good idea to have a core group of people, a coalition, or a group to work with on your issue. Who are these groups and how could they contribute to your work?

\* Adapted from *National Association for the Education of Young Children Advocacy Tool Kit* (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2004) and Sylvia Puente, “Nonprofit Business Excellence: Leadership through Learning” (advocacy training, Chicago, IL, March 2009).

## Conducting a Power Analysis

Knowing who has the power to make the change you seek will make your work not only easier, but also more successful! There are a variety of different players in the education realm, including policymakers, state and local agency leaders, community leaders, and parents. Depending on the specific issue you are tackling, your advocacy could target any of these individuals. Conducting a power analysis will help you understand how these actors work together, who has power, and who will put you on track for a definite victory.

The two questions guiding a power analysis are:

- Who has the power to make the decision you need to change the situation? This is the primary target.

- Who can influence the primary target? This is the secondary target.

You will also want to consider:

- How do we influence the decision-maker?
  - This may require conducting research, talking to people who know the decision-maker, and identifying strengths and vulnerabilities.
  - If the decision-maker is an elected official, did your constituency vote for him or her?

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The Campaign for High School Equity (CHSE) is a coalition of leading civil rights organizations representing communities of color which is focused on high school education reform. It was formed to address the unequal American public education system, which does not provide high-quality education to students of color and youth from low-income neighborhoods.

The standards discussion is particularly important to CHSE because students of color are disproportionately affected by low academic standards. CHSE has been working with advocacy and grassroots organizations across the country to help them understand the common standards movement and how to effectively lobby policymakers on proper implementation.

The CHSE coalition is made up of the following organizations: National Council of La Raza, National Urban League, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, The Leadership Conference Education Fund, Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, League of United Latin American Citizens, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, Alliance for Excellent Education, National Indian Education Association, and the Southeast Asian Action Resource Center.

- What are the other points of influence?
  - Who are your friends and allies?
  - Who are the decision-maker's friends and allies?
  - Who are your enemies?
  - Who are the decision-maker's enemies?
  - Who else cares about this issue? Think beyond your friends and community.
  - Who else can you work in coalition with on this issue?

### ***Sign-On Letter***

A sign-on letter states the position of several organizations about a piece of legislation or a change in policy. A letter with the signatures of many organizations demonstrates that many are in favor of or opposed to a policy.

## **Resources and Tools to Advance Coalition Work**

### ***Legislative Advocacy Days at the Capitol***

You can organize a day when your coalition travels to your state capitol or to Washington, DC to visit the offices of your representatives. A legislative advocacy day can provide an opportunity to train your organization in the lobbying process, the legal rules of lobbying, and the legislative process. An advocacy day can amplify your voice by addressing all of the issues important to you and your organization in one visit. This type of event can empower your community and strengthen your coalition by giving you an opportunity to influence public policy. Go to [http://www.nclr.org/index.php/publications/legislative\\_advocacy\\_for\\_community-based\\_organizations\\_an\\_nclr\\_tool\\_kit/](http://www.nclr.org/index.php/publications/legislative_advocacy_for_community-based_organizations_an_nclr_tool_kit/) to find out more about how to organize and carry out a state-level Legislative Advocacy Day.



*Here is an example of a sign-on letter:*

June 13, 2008

United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Opposition to NCLB Recess Until Reauthorization Act

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned civil rights organizations write to express our strong opposition to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Recess Until Reauthorization Act. This legislation would allow states, districts, and schools to receive federal funding under the NCLB Act with no accountability for complying with key provisions of the law.

NCLB is intended to expand educational opportunities to minority and other disadvantaged students. At the heart of the law is Section 1116, which focuses on raising standards, measuring academic progress, holding schools accountable, and requiring school improvement. These provisions are designed to ensure that all students receive the academic preparation necessary to pursue higher education and become productive members of the workforce. Therefore, the civil rights community has been consistent and clear in its support of NCLB and Section 1116 in particular.

In addition, the civil rights community has always believed that for civil rights laws to be effective, they must have strong enforcement provisions. The NCLB Recess Until Reauthorization Act would suspend enforcement of Section 1116 of NCLB for all schools. Moreover, it is our understanding that the sponsors of this legislation intend to include it as a policy rider to appropriations legislation. As such, we believe this legislation presents a dangerous precedent.

Specifically, this bill raises questions about whether or not Congress will be expected to suspend accountability in other federal programs important to minority communities simply because they have not been reauthorized on schedule. For example, will the performance measures under the Workforce Investment Act be suspended given that it was scheduled for reauthorization in 2003? Will Individual Education Plans be suspended until the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is reauthorized and fully funded?

In addition, we wish to remind Congress that attaching such substantive riders to appropriations bills has long been a tactic designed to preserve practices that are harmful to minorities. We believe that attaching the NCLB Recess Until Reauthorization Act to an appropriations bill represents an unwanted return of this nefarious strategy.

Clearly, this amendment represents dangerous and irresponsible policymaking. We urge members of Congress to oppose the rider if it is offered, and we urge the leadership of both parties to ensure that members are aware that riders of this kind are an improper way of legislating and an attack on civil rights laws.

Sincerely,

Citizens Commission on Civil Rights  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
National Council of La Raza



## SECTION III: TAKING ACTION

### Mapping Out Your Resources and Needs\*

Before developing your advocacy plan, consider the resources you currently have access to and the tools you will need. Advocacy plans do not have to be costly or expensive, but it is important to consider the financial and capacity constraints that your institution may have.

Questions to Consider:

- Do you have the resources necessary to execute your strategy? Resources may include:
  - Money
  - Time
  - Human resources, people power, leaders
  - Research, data, technical knowledge
  - Relationships (build relationships with folks who know decision-makers and can provide inside information)
- Can you do it alone or do you need others to help you?
  - Who else cares about this issue?
  - Who else can work with you in coalition? (See “To-Do List Before Joining or Forming a Coalition” on page 23.)

- How will work on this issue impact you and others?
  - Who will become your friends?
  - Who will become your enemies?

Check out Alliance for Justice’s Advocacy Capacity Assessment Tool at [advocacyevaluation.org](http://advocacyevaluation.org) for more guidance on assessing your agency’s capacity for advocacy. This particular resource contains a series of self-evaluation measures by which organizations can assess and strengthen their capacity for advocacy.

### Developing an Action Plan

Now that you have identified your problem, outcomes, and targets, it is time to develop your action plan! There are many options to consider for generating action and effecting change. Your group can organize to implement any of the following strategies:

- **Organizing**
  - Organizing is the intentional process of meeting with community members to identify the issues that they are most concerned about and then developing an advocacy strategy or issues campaign to address those concerns.
  - This process can include parents, students, community members, and a range of different stakeholders.

\* Adapted from *State and Local Police Enforcement of Federal Immigration Laws* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2006).

### ■ Negotiation

- Negotiation involves meeting with decision-makers to ask for what you want and determine what they will do to help you reach your goal.
- This process often requires some back-and-forth. For example, the individual or institution you are negotiating with may offer less than what you want or say it will take a longer period of time, requiring your organization to respond.

### ■ Administrative Lobbying

- Administrative lobbying is the process of working directly with a decision-maker to change a specific policy, rule, or procedure.
- Oftentimes, administrative lobbying requires targeting a specific agency or institution to effect change.

### ■ Legislative Lobbying

- Legislative lobbying is a request to an elected official or governing body for a law to be adopted, amended, or revoked.
- This type of lobbying may include testifying before a legislative body on a particular piece of legislation or working with elected officials to draft legislative language.

### ■ Media

- Using the media is an integral part of any action plan as it can be an effective and powerful tool for you to use in spreading your message widely.
- Some of the actions you can take include writing a letter to the editor, holding a press conference, or pitching an article about your cause. You'll learn more about the media in Section IV.

### **Take Action!**

Once you have selected which of these strategies you and/or your coalition will engage in, it is time to take action! Carrying out your advocacy plan may be a daunting task, but it can make a huge impact on the lives of Latino students. Try answering these questions before launching into your work:

- What specific tasks do you have?
- When will you perform these tasks?
- Does your advocacy plan require a single action, or will you have to perform additional actions?
- Have you written down what your next steps are?
- Have you made your assignments?
- Have people followed through on their commitments?

## Resources and Tools for Action

### **Legislative Advocacy**

Legislative advocacy is an important activity that your organization can carry out to achieve your mission and engage clients as agents of change. Your organization can build on its mission, address inequalities, and develop solutions to systemic problems by engaging in legislative advocacy strategies.

Community-based organizations should be viewed as part of the community rather than strictly as servants of the community, and community members should be active participants in social change. By integrating legislative advocacy into their work, community-based organizations can help change the systems that create the need for services.

Legislative advocacy consists of advocacy and public policy activities, which includes but is not limited to lobbying. You can read a NCLR tool kit on the rules for advocacy and lobbying at [www.nclr.org/index.php/publications/legislative\\_advocacy\\_for\\_community-based\\_organizations\\_an\\_nclr\\_tool\\_kit/](http://www.nclr.org/index.php/publications/legislative_advocacy_for_community-based_organizations_an_nclr_tool_kit/). Nonprofits, as tax-exempt organizations, are restricted in the amount of money that they can spend on lobbying. Certain advocacy and public policy activities are not considered lobbying and are therefore not restricted. Some forms of legislative advocacy include:

### **Phone Calls from Constituents**

As an organization, you can encourage your community and clients to make phone calls to their lawmakers. This form of grassroots lobbying can have a significant impact. Members of

Congress record and track the number of phone calls they receive in support of or in opposition to a particular piece of legislation or issue. Phone calls let legislators know what their constituents are thinking when they cannot check in with their home districts.

### **Tips for Telephoning Your Elected Representatives**

To find the phone numbers of your senators and representatives, you can reference a searchable online congressional directory at [www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdir.tt](http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdir.tt). This online directory allows you to find your elected officials, including members of Congress, by simply inserting your ZIP code. If you do not have access to the Internet, you can also call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask for your Senator's or representative's office. Remember that telephone calls are usually taken by a staff member, not the member of Congress. Ask to speak with the aide who handles the issue about which you wish to comment.

After identifying yourself, tell the aide you would like to leave a brief message, such as "Please tell Senator/ Representative [name] that I support/ oppose [bill number or name of bill]."

You will also want to state reasons for your support or opposition to the bill. Ask for your senator or representative's position on the bill. You may also request a written response to your telephone call.

**Issue Briefs**

Unlike the one-pagers, issue briefs of three to five pages go into more detail about a specific bill or piece of legislation's impact on the Latino community. They allow you more space to articulate your arguments and expound on your data. Issue briefs are appropriate for when you are visiting committee staffers, conducting congressional briefings, communicating with federal departments working on the legislation, or talking to reporters who are doing in-depth stories on the legislation or issue area. To view an example of an issue brief online, go to [www.highschoolequity.org/ccss-issue-brief?Itemid=36](http://www.highschoolequity.org/ccss-issue-brief?Itemid=36) and read the Campaign for High School Equity's issue brief on the Common Core State Standards Initiative.



## Communities of Color: A Critical Perspective in the Common Standards Movement

**ISSUE BRIEF**CHSE is a special project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors

**Briefings**

Briefings are mini-lectures that focus on a specific topic. At briefings, two or three experts deliver presentations to the audience, which is usually though not exclusively made up of legislators, legislative staffers, or the general public. Briefings can be a helpful way to present detailed information on an issue and get a reading on what members of a committee are thinking. You can also work with other nonprofit advocacy groups to help you organize the best briefing possible.

Briefings are a great way to make contact with dozens of offices at once, which saves you the time of individual visits. They are a useful way to present information on an issue to a large group of federal or state legislators and staffers, school board members, or state education agencies. At the federal level, they are usually sponsored by congressional members (it helps to have one from each party) or by subgroups of Congress (such as the Congressional Hispanic Caucus). At the local level, call your school board or state legislator's office to find out how to organize one in your community. Be sure to have handouts or a PowerPoint presentation on hand to supplement the talk so that attendees have something to take with them after the briefing ends.

## SECTION IV: MEDIA TOOLS AND RESOURCES

### Understanding Media

Now that you have developed your message, learned how to build a coalition, and formed an advocacy plan, get your message out there! The media can act as a great resource for you if you use it to your advantage. Getting others to hear your argument and tell your story will help you engage new audiences, create stronger partnerships, influence key decision-makers, and build momentum for change. When working with all media outlets and journalists, you should know how to do the following:

#### ***Find and Talk to the Right People\****

Create a list of reporters who cover general education issues. Reporters change jobs and beats frequently, so it is vital to keep your list updated.

- Keep the following outlets in mind: daily and weekly newspapers; local, city, and regional newspapers and magazines; television and radio stations (including cable and local access stations); and education blogs. You may also consider national education-specific news outlets such as *Education Week* or *Education Daily*.
- Stay in touch with reporters via press releases, emails, and phone calls.

### ***Be a Reporter's Go-To Source***

- **Know the ground rules.** Everything you say to a reporter is on the record. If you do not want to be quoted, or if you just want to speak "on background," say so.
- **Know your audience.** Journalists have different needs, interests, and levels of expertise, so vary your remarks accordingly.
- **Frame your issue in 30-second sound bites.** Most journalists have neither the time nor the inclination to ask for more detailed information. Identify one or two key points about your issue and repeat these often.
- **Keep it simple.** Avoid jargon or overly technical language.
- **Know the facts.** Know the basic facts about your organization, its mission, and its activities. You should also know basic facts about the local Hispanic population.
- **Respect deadlines.** Always return press calls promptly.
- **Offer supplemental or background information.** View press interviews as an opportunity to distribute your organization's reports, statements, and additional information.
- **Be accurate and credible.** Do not deliberately mislead or misrepresent your views to a reporter, and do not be afraid to say you do not know the



answer to a question. If you are unsure of something, offer to call the reporter back with the information.

### **Get Media Coverage**

- **Ensure media coverage by addressing these questions:** Why is this important now? Why is this newsworthy? Who should care about this issue?
- **Create photo opportunities.** For small or weekly newspapers, you can even provide the photos yourself.
- **Give the reporter an exclusive.** A media outlet might consider your story big news because they will have a “scoop” which puts them ahead of the rest of other outlets.
- **Make it different or unusual.** Media outlets like to cover stories that have not been covered before or stories that show a different or new perspective.
- **Involve a big name.** Invite an elected official or local celebrity to your event.
- **Make it personal.** Talk about why this matters to you.
- **Be part of the solution.** The media hear a lot about the negative impact of the issues we address—tell them what you are doing to change things.
- **Make the story local.** If the state legislature is debating how to use federal money, look for any funds that could go to an education program in your

community and talk about how this money could make or break the program.

### **Ethnic Media\***

Spanish language media outlets cover news from a Latino perspective and serve to inform and educate the Latino community. In general, Spanish-language news organizations do not have the resources to assign a reporter a specific beat (e.g., education, health care, or politics), so reporters generally cover a little bit of everything. Additionally, they are often hungry for information and are constantly looking for relevant and culturally sensitive messages. Here are some other tips for working with Spanish-language media:

- **Provide statistics and data on your local Hispanic community.** This increases your chances for coverage and publication.
- **Remember that many journalists at these outlets are newcomers.** Do not presume that they are familiar with U.S. institutions or our political system.
- **Cultivate your relationships.** Latino journalists tend to be more personal and loyal than mainstream journalists, so be warm and friendly.

### **New Media**

New media tools are Internet-based resources that have a tremendous power to catalyze change. The following are several tools you may want to consider using in your media outreach strategy:

\* Adapted from Physicians for Human Rights, “Advocacy Toolkit,” <http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/toolkit> (accessed April 2009).

- **Google Tools.** Google offers particularly useful tools for working with advocates outside of your organization. Google Groups allows users to create discussion groups and participate in threaded conversations by email. Google Docs acts as an online word processing application that allows users to collaborate with one another in real time. Google Calendar enables you to share calendars, which can help groups plan projects together. The best part? All of these tools are free!
- **Blogs.** You may want to write a blog tracking your progress in getting districts in your state to consider your common standards implementation recommendations. Additionally, you should make a list of bloggers who write on education issues and who would be likely to cover your work.
- **YouTube.** YouTube is a video-sharing website. You could create public service announcements (PSAs), call to action videos, or video story banks to create buzz about common standards implementation. SchoolTube.com is a similar, education-specific video website for students, educators, and advocates alike.

### **Social Networks**

Social networks, such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter, are online

communities where people meet to socialize and exchange information. You can use social networks to post your organization's newsworthy items, grow your advocacy community, and build advocacy communities, which you can then leverage for support during your campaigns or advocacy drives.

### **Television and Radio**

The Hispanic population spends more hours per week than non-Hispanics watching TV and listening to radio. In fact, television is still Hispanics' preferred medium, so do not underestimate the reach of Univision, Telemundo, and CNN en Español! Always be professional and prepared when giving an interview (see Appendix E for more tips on TV interviewing). While many of the suggestions regarding television interviewing are relevant to radio as well, there are a few radio-specific tips to keep in mind:

- Vocal inflections are especially important. No one wants to listen to a monotone speaker.
- Since it is radio, feel free to take note cards as a reference, but be careful not to use them as a script.
- Speak clearly and enunciate.
- If your segment is interrupted by a commercial or announcement, be sure to repeat your main talking point.

### **Traditional Media**

Hispanics tend to read more newspapers than non-Hispanics, making "traditional" media critical as you engage in



education advocacy. In general, your communication with the press should be catchy and concise. Keep in mind that even if reporters do not use your press release or op-ed, these documents are still good strategies to make your organization more visible so that reporters will call you when they do write about common standards.

### **Press Release**

A press release is a short memo sent directly to the media to communicate your organization's perspective or position.

#### **How-to:**

- Keep it short—one page is best—and stick to your strongest messages and most important points.
- Be as catchy and enticing as possible with your title; think of this as the headline you want to see in tomorrow's newspaper.
- Use a quotation from your spokesperson or your organization's director in your closing paragraph, and make sure that the quote is exactly what you want to read in tomorrow's newspaper.
- Include your organization's name and the contact person's information on each page, if it is longer than one page. At the bottom of the first page type "<more>" so that the reader knows that there are additional pages.

#### **Dissemination:**

- Fax and/or email the release to your press list within one week of when the topic will be relevant news.
- If you are particularly interested in certain reporters or media outlets carrying your story, call to follow up on the release.
- For broad and immediate distribution, you can make arrangements with a newswire service—such as U.S. Newswire at (800) 544-8995 or PR Newswire at (202) 547-5155—for them to disseminate your release.



News Release  
www.nclr.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 3, 2010

**Contact:**

Elena Gaona  
(202) 785-1670

**SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON CORE  
STATE STANDARDS WILL BENEFIT LATINO AND BLACK STUDENTS**

**Washington, DC**—Now that California and Colorado have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), 78% of Latino and 88% of Black students in the U.S. will be under this new academic standards system. Following California's move to adopt, NCLR (National Council of La Raza), the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, urged all states to follow suit by establishing higher academic standards and ensuring that schools are held accountable for implementing them in a way that encourages greater academic success for students. Most of the students in the 34 states that have adopted CCSS, including two provisional adoptions, and the District of Columbia, attend schools that currently have lower academic standards than CCSS.

"Now that a majority of the states have adopted common standards, it is critical that we think about how to effectively implement them. This is a real opportunity to ensure that Latino and Black students have everything needed to succeed under the Common Core State Standards," said Delia Pompa, NCLR Vice President of Education.

NCLR emphasized that how the standards are implemented is vital to the effect they will have on students' academic achievement and issued the following recommendations for reforms that are needed to ensure that all students can benefit from CCSS:

**Alignment of Curricula and Instruction with Standards and Assessments.** In order for students to meet more challenging academic benchmarks, the curriculum, instructional materials, and tests to measure performance must be aligned with the new standards.

**Appropriate Test Use.** Assessment tests must be accurate and reliable in order to demonstrate what a student knows. This is especially true for English language learners, since many states use inappropriate assessments and accommodations for testing them.

**Effective Teachers.** Teachers need intensive preparation and ongoing professional development to help them incorporate the new standards into their instruction and effectively teach students who are learning English.

**Active Parent and Community Participation.** Policymakers and administrators should provide information to parents and communities in a manner that is easily understood and gets them more involved in helping to improve student test scores.

"Standards alone will not ensure that students learn what they need to learn. Accountability is key to making sure that schools have the resources and support to help all students reach more challenging academic benchmarks. It is an important step to putting more Latino and Black students on the path to college," said Pompa.

Need more information?

Visit NCLR's Website | Blog | Facebook | MySpace | Twitter.

###

**Op-Ed**

An op-ed is a short opinion piece published in a newspaper written to gain visibility and credibility. The term refers to an article opposite the editorial page.

**How-to:**

- Keep your message and language simple: one main message or argument with up to three supporting points.
- Aim for 750–800 words in English\* and no more than 500–700 in Spanish.
- Be compelling and convincing. Discuss why this issue is important and make a strong case for why the reader should care or take action.
- Write on a newsworthy topic—something current in the news.
- Call for action, offer insight from personal experience, make recommendations, recount an anecdote or personal experience, or evoke a picture or common memory.
- Be prepared by having a general education-related op-ed outline ready to be fleshed out when an opportunity presents itself.

**Dissemination:**

- Send or deliver the article to the op-ed editor. Include a cover letter on your organization's letterhead thanking the editor for this opportunity.
- If your article is used, write a thank-you note to the person who made the decision.
- Consider offering your article to the largest paper in your community on an exclusive basis.

\* The English-language word count is based on the op-ed submission guidelines for *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

*Here is an example of an op-ed:*

**Wall Street Journal: Obama's School Reform Policies are a Priority**

on July 15, 2010 by Joel I. Klein, Michael Lomax and Janet Murguía

In the days following his inauguration, President Obama included a package of educational reforms in his stimulus bill that offered states financial incentives to make dramatic improvements in their education systems. About 10% of the \$100 billion allocated for education was used to create competitive grants. States could only win them by drafting comprehensive and aggressive plans to, for example, adopt higher academic standards, turn around chronically low-performing schools, and redesign teacher evaluation and compensation systems.

Although it has received much less attention than health care and financial regulatory reform, this measure may ultimately be one of Mr. Obama's most profound and lasting achievements. In just one year, we've already seen more reforms proposed and enacted around the country than in the preceding decade.

Yet on July 1, with little warning, the House of Representatives watered down these reform efforts by approving an amendment to the emergency supplemental appropriations bill, proposed by Rep. David Obey (D., Wis.). It takes away \$800 million that has already been committed to three critical parts of the president's education reform package—Race to the Top, the Teacher Incentive Fund, and the Charter Schools Program. This breaks a promise to the states, districts and schools that are doing the most important work in America. The funds are to be redirected to a \$10 billion "Edujobs" bill to prevent teacher layoffs.

We fully support the goal of saving teachers' jobs, but this is not the way to do it. No one is more committed to high-quality public education than our teachers. But without reform, they will be trapped in a system that has long been frustrating their best efforts, and failing our children.

According to a 2009 Alliance for Excellent Education report, barely half of all African-American and Latino students graduate from high school today, compared to over three-quarters of their white counterparts. A study last year from McKinsey concludes that the average student eligible for free or reduced-fee lunch is approximately two years of learning behind the average student who doesn't need such assistance.

These numbers are simply not acceptable. We must recognize that our system of public education is broken, and has been for some time. While it is underserving all of our students, it is most starkly failing low-income and minority students—the very children who depend on it the most. Without reform, we will be consigning another generation to poor education and second-class life options.

It is precisely such problems Mr. Obama's reforms are meant to address.

Last month, more than three dozen states submitted substantial reform proposals to the federal government, in hopes of receiving the funding they will need to implement them. Unfortunately, if Mr. Obey's amendment is confirmed by the Senate, at least four states poised to enact reforms will lose their chance to secure the necessary funding.



*(example continued)*

States that have spent a year planning for major changes and are now likely to see their plans derailed include New York, Maryland, Louisiana, Illinois, Colorado and California. The promise of the last year will be lost, and the system will just keep sputtering along as it has been, year after dispiriting year.

A growing coalition of advocates for equity and excellence—including education and civil rights groups and members of Congress from both sides of the aisle—have united to oppose these cuts. Meanwhile, Mr. Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan have offered to work with Mr. Obey to find other ways of funding the Edujobs bill.

But unless and until they find a solution together, the Senate should reject the Obey amendment. The choice it proposes—between a reformed educational system and preservation of teachers’ jobs—is a fundamentally misguided one. Our students need and deserve both.

*Mr. Klein is chancellor of New York City schools. Mr. Lomax is president and chief executive of the United Negro College Fund. Ms. Murguía is president and chief executive of the National Council of La Raza. They are co-chairs of the Board of the Education Equality Project.*

*(example continued)*

**Estándar uniforme escolar Janet Murguía**

7 julio 2010 por Janet Murguía *La Opinión* California

El estado de California no puede sacrificar el futuro de sus niños para salir del déficit. No es económicamente conveniente abandonar las reformas necesarias de la educación para saldar deudas actuales. Por el contrario, debemos considerar a las escuelas de California como soluciones a la crisis económica que padecen el estado y el país.

Mientras la tasa de desempleo del estado se eleva al 12.4%—superando los índices nacionales del 9.7%—se estima que aproximadamente una tercera parte de los estudiantes de California abandonarían la enseñanza secundaria, y que otra tercera parte se graduará sin la enseñanza necesaria para tener éxito en los estudios universitarios y en el mercado laboral. La crisis de deserción escolar afecta de manera desproporcionada a los estudiantes hispanos, que sólo tienen un 57% de posibilidades de graduarse puntualmente de la preparatoria con un diploma normal. No podemos seguir ignorando esta grave situación.

En Los Ángeles, 47,650 alumnos hispanos dejaron los estudios en el 2008. Si esa cifra se redujera a la mitad, podría ejercer un impacto profundamente positivo en la economía. Su poder adquisitivo colectivo se incrementaría en \$324.7 millones, gastarían \$228.3 millones más de lo que gastarían si no se gradúan, y gran parte de esa suma se transformaría en ingresos para la región.

Pero hay más: existen cifras con un reflejo preciso de la situación nacional. Si la cantidad estimada de 600,000 alumnos que abandonaron los estudios en el 2008 se dividiera en dos, daría como resultado nuevos graduados que ganarían hasta \$4.1 mil millones por concepto de ingresos adicionales, y gastarían otros \$2.8 mil millones para impulsar la economía de los Estados Unidos.

Aunque aún no se conocen todas las respuestas, está claro que debe ser parte de la solución económica garantizar que todos los alumnos de enseñanza secundaria se gradúen listos para cursar estudios universitarios, e incorporarse a la fuerza laboral.

Sin embargo, buena parte de la juventud hispana no lo logra, y es en gran medida porque no se espera que lo haga. He oído decir a demasiados alumnos hispanos que se les sugiere tomar cursos menos rigurosos en comparación, por ejemplo, a los de Colocación Avanzada (AP, por sus siglas en inglés). Se está exhortando a demasiados alumnos a que tomen cursos vocacionales en vez de clases preparatorias para la universidad porque, como se les dice con frecuencia, “la enseñanza universitaria no es para todos”.

El esfuerzo nacional conocido con el nombre de “Iniciativa de Estándares Esenciales Estatales Comunes” (“Common Core State Standards Initiative”) está haciendo frente a este problema. Se trata de una iniciativa voluntaria, liderada por el estado, con el propósito de crear un conjunto de estándares



*(example continued)*

educacionales claros para todas las escuelas, desde el momento en que los niños inician sus estudios preescolares, hasta el final del último año de la enseñanza de secundaria. La iniciativa exigirá que todos los estudiantes—independientemente de su región de residencia, nivel de ingresos o raza—se rijan por los mismos estándares con grandes expectativas.

Educar a todos los estudiantes con altos estándares es esencial para el mantenimiento de la competitividad económica. Los estándares estatales actuales en Estados Unidos son generalmente inferiores a los de otros países desarrollados. La “Iniciativa de Estándares Esenciales Estatales Comunes” tiene el potencial de garantizar que los estudiantes hispanos se gradúen, y que lo hagan con el conocimiento necesario para competir para ir a las mejores universidades, así como por los empleos mejor remunerados.

En la medida que California transita hacia la posible adopción de estándares comunes, con una votación al respecto planificada para agosto, debe tenerse en cuenta las necesidades de los alumnos y las familias hispanas. Es la única manera de garantizar que nuestros niños se gradúen, y que disfruten numerosos éxitos en la universidad y en la vida. Es una solución inteligente ante la crisis económica que ataca al estado y a la nación, y un paso importante hacia una reforma que puede mejorar realmente la educación en los Estados Unidos.

Janet Murguía es presidenta y directora general del Consejo Nacional de La Raza.

**Letter to the Editor\***

A letter to the editor is a very short opinion piece usually written in favor of or in opposition to a position presented in a recent news story.

**How-to:**

- Keep it short—between 100 and 200 words and no more than three brief paragraphs.
- Reference the title, date, and author of the original piece in your opening sentence.
- Lead with your most important point in the first paragraph.
- Suggest what the author should have said or a solution to the problem presented in the news article.
- Include your name, city, state, affiliation, and contact information.

**Dissemination:**

- Submit your letter the day the article you are responding to is published.

**You can use this sample letter to the editor as a basis for your own!**

To the editor:

Your recent editorial, [*reference the newspapers article's title, with date*], calls for an increased number of effective teachers as essential to improving education, but effective teachers are merely one piece of the puzzle. Many educational elements serve to support students, but high academic standards are the backbone of the education system. If we are truly committed to reforming education and raising America's international standing, then we must aim to increase academic standards as well.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a comprehensive way to raise standards and states have been rapidly adopting the new standards. These new standards are internationally benchmarked, preparing our students for the competitive global economy. Latinos especially have much to gain as many of their communities, often poor, are continually plagued by low academic standards.

A highly educated workforce is vital to a strong economy and today's Latino students will make up a critical mass of the future workforce. Common standards are necessary to facilitate their success. Without rigorous academic standards, American education will continue to decline and we will continue to fall short in an area where the United States once led the world.

Sincerely,

Name

Organization (if applicable)

City, State

Contact information



## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: National and State Data Sources

#### **Student Demographic Data**

**Annie E. Casey Foundation** produces an annual *Kids Count* report that provides state-by-state data on key indicators of children's well-being.

[www.aecf.org/kidscount/kc2000](http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/kc2000)

**Education Week** produces an annual report titled *Diplomas Count*, which provides data on high school graduation rates.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2010/06/10/index.html>

**Migration Policy Institute Data Hub** includes *American Community Survey* and Census data on the foreign born by state. State profiles include demographic and social data, language and workforce data, and income and poverty data.

[www.migrationinformation.org/DataHub/acscensus.cfm](http://www.migrationinformation.org/DataHub/acscensus.cfm)

**National Center for Education Statistics** provides online access to education databases and updates national statistics on an annual basis in reports such as *The Condition of Education*.

<http://nces.ed.gov>

**National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs** provides online research and resources for high quality education for ELLs.

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/>

**Pew Hispanic Center** provides data about an array of issues, such as immigration, elections, economics, etc., that affect the Latino community.

<http://pewhispanic.org/>

#### **Policy/Issue Resources**

##### **Alliance for Excellent Education**

provides state-specific, regional, and national profiles that analyze data about education policies that affect secondary schools.

- View state profiles online or download the one-page common core state standards profile PDF for each state: [http://www.all4ed.org/publication\\_material/CommonStandardsStateCards](http://www.all4ed.org/publication_material/CommonStandardsStateCards)
- View or download fact sheets on a variety of issues such as literacy rates, dropouts, and economic impact: [http://www.all4ed.org/publication\\_material/fact\\_sheets](http://www.all4ed.org/publication_material/fact_sheets)
- National look at high school graduation rates: [http://www.all4ed.org/about\\_the\\_crisis/schools/map](http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis/schools/map)
- Individual State Resources: [http://www.all4ed.org/about\\_the\\_crisis/schools/state\\_and\\_local\\_info/list](http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis/schools/state_and_local_info/list)
- Look up how your local high school is doing: [http://www.all4ed.org/about\\_the\\_crisis/schools/state\\_and\\_local\\_info/promotingpower](http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis/schools/state_and_local_info/promotingpower)
- Common Core State Standards blog: [http://www.all4ed.org/blog\\_categories/common\\_standards](http://www.all4ed.org/blog_categories/common_standards)

**Campaign for High School Equity**

is a coalition of leading civil rights organizations representing communities of color that is focused on high school education reform. Online resources around the common core state standards include the following:

- Issue brief: <http://www.highschoolequity.org/ccss-issue-brief>
- Fact sheet: [http://www.highschoolequity.org/images/stories/pdf/ccs\\_facts\\_0702.pdf](http://www.highschoolequity.org/images/stories/pdf/ccs_facts_0702.pdf)
- Frequently Asked Questions: [http://www.highschoolequity.org/images/stories/pdf/ccs\\_faqs\\_0706.pdf](http://www.highschoolequity.org/images/stories/pdf/ccs_faqs_0706.pdf)

**Common Core State Standards**

**Initiative** has an official website that follows the common core state standards adoption across the country. You may also download the K–12 and college and career ready common core state standards here: <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>.  
<http://www.corestandards.org/>

## Appendix B: Federal Legislative Process\*

The legislative process will help guide your advocacy activities. To advocate for a new piece of legislation, change legislation, or defeat legislation, you must know the steps of how a bill becomes a law in order to follow the legislation and decide when and how to advocate. To advocate for federal appropriations, you must monitor the separate but similar federal budget and appropriations process. While many states follow a similar process for passing laws, you should look up your specific state's legislative process to engage in state and local advocacy.

### **How a Bill Becomes a Law**

With some differences mentioned below, the legislative process is essentially the same in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, and includes six basic steps:

#### **1. Introduction and Referral to Committee**

The bill is given a number and usually referred to the appropriate committee. The most intensive consideration of a bill takes place in committee. A committee could choose not to act on a bill and the bill would be considered dead. There are 19 committees in the House and 16 in the Senate, as well as several select committees that are appointed to oversee the development of legislation. Each committee is divided into subcommittees. For example, the House Committee on Education and Labor includes a Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education.

**Advocacy Tip:** Find out which committees your congressional members serve on by visiting [house.gov](http://house.gov), [senate.gov](http://senate.gov), and [congress.org](http://congress.org). You can let your congressional leaders know your thoughts on their committees' issues.

#### **2. Subcommittee**

Once a subcommittee is created, two steps are normally followed:

- a. **Hearings:** The subcommittee listens to testimony from relevant government departments and agencies, members of Congress, senators, and private individuals. A transcript is made of committee hearings, which becomes public record.
- b. **Markups:** After hearings are completed, the subcommittee will gather to formally draft the bill. The "base bill," or bill that was introduced (sometimes with modifications made by the subcommittee chair, known as the "chairman's mark"), is amended, voted on, and subsequently "reported out" of the subcommittee to the full committee.

**Advocacy Tip:** The subcommittee level is where the legislative process really begins. You can use the information you have gathered about subcommittee memberships to help you develop legislation, to contact certain members about the subcommittee's issues, or to inform their staff about issues that might not be on their radar. This is the stage at which you might prepare and submit testimony in person or in writing for a hearing.

\* Adapted from: Erika Beltran and Sarah Dolan, *New Leaders, New Directions: Tools for Advancing an Early Childhood Agenda for the Latino Community* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2009).

### **3. Full Committee**

The full committee follows the same steps as the subcommittee. Hearings are frequently excluded and a formal written report is always included, which provides details on the intent of the legislation, its impact on existing laws and programs, the position of the executive branch, and the views of dissenting members of the committee.

**Advocacy Tip:** This is a critical stage for contacting members who are on committees that deal with your chosen issue. Members will debate during committee whether specific pieces of legislation should be included or excluded. The more voices members hear, the more powerful the message and the more likely they will argue and vote your way.

### **4. Floor Action, Debate, and Voting**

After a bill is approved by its assigned committee, it will be reported back to the chamber in which it was introduced. The bill is placed in its chronological order on the calendar. The calendar determines if, when, and in what order bills will come to the floor for debate and a vote. Each chamber of Congress works off of its own legislative calendar. In the House, the Speaker and Majority Leader determine where a bill is placed on the schedule. In the Senate, the Majority and Minority Leaders make that determination. Once on the floor, each respective chamber considers and votes on amendments and a vote is taken on final passage of the bill. If the bill passes, it is referred to the other chamber to begin the process of committee and floor action.

**Advocacy Tip:** In this step, contact all members of the Senate or House, regardless of committee assignments, since they will all vote on the proposed legislation. Make phone calls and send letters, faxes, and emails asking your representative and senators to vote for or against a specific piece of legislation or amendment. It is crucial that you contact your representatives at this stage. Sending your lobbying materials to reporters who cover your issue and to editorial boards can also be very helpful.

### **5. Conference Committee**

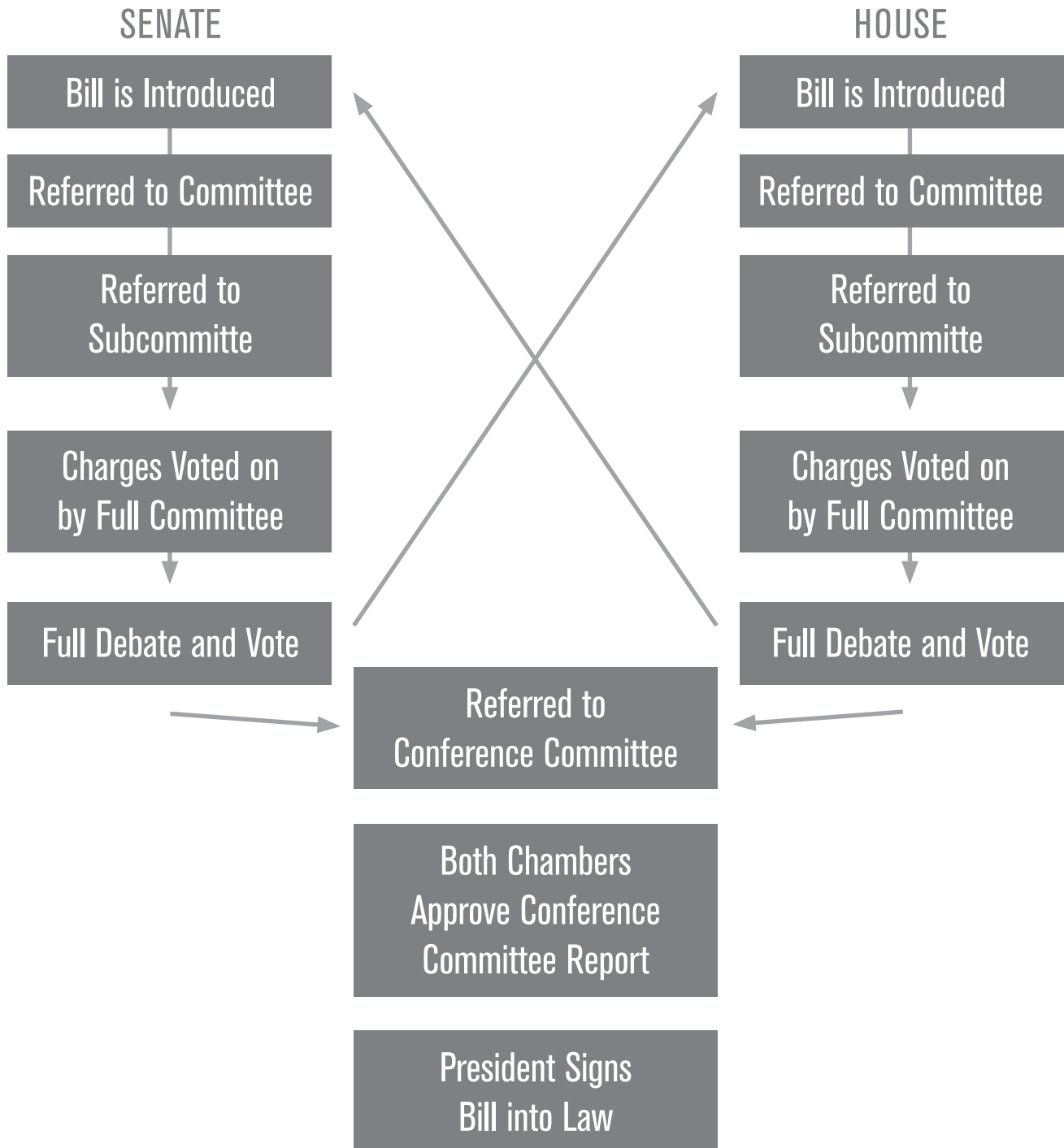
If a bill passes both the House and the Senate, a joint Conference Committee will meet to resolve the differences between the two versions. The final result, known as the conference report, is sent back to both chambers for consideration.

**Advocacy Tip:** If your members are on the Conference Committee, let them know your position on legislation that you believe should be in the final bill. If your members are not on the Conference Committee, ask them to convey your messages to their colleagues on the committee.

### **6. President's Signature**

Once the conference report is voted on and passes in the House and the Senate, the bill is sent to the President. Once the President signs the bill, it becomes public law. The bill dies if the President decides to veto the bill, unless Congress overrides the veto. The House and the Senate must both vote by a two-thirds majority to override the President's veto.

# How a Bill Becomes a Law



## Appendix C: School Boards

### *The Role of the School Board*

The school board in your community will surely play a pivotal role in how common standards are implemented. They are the main point of contact for advocates who are looking to institute district-wide change and should be viewed as a beneficial partner to have on your side. School boards are also political institutions, so keep that in mind as you prepare your common standards implementation strategy.

The information that follows provides general information about school boards, why they're important, and how you can engage with them on different levels and in different forums.

### *Engagement between the School Board and the Public<sup>22</sup>*

The school board is an integral part of the community and can be a powerful partner in whatever kind of educational advocacy you are involved in. This information outlines why engagement is important and the typical forms of school board/community engagement, which will help you pursue your advocacy strategy. This should certainly not be viewed as an exhaustive list, but rather one to get you started. Engagement with school boards can take many forms and should be tailored to the needs that best fit your community.

#### ■ Why is engagement important?

- Schools are an important part of the community and provide the first major opportunity for adults to become involved.

- If schools and communities are working together, they can create the schools they want, to match the life they envision for their children.
- If citizen involvement is weakened, so too will the commitment to public institutions, including public schools.
- Public schools are dependable vehicles for developing public engagement that is focused on the community's common good.

#### ■ What does engagement look like?

##### ■ Informal engagement

- Everyday conversations with parents, teachers, administrators
- Talking to reporters
- Addressing community or neighborhood clubs or associations, e.g., PTA, church groups, civic associations

##### ■ Formal engagement

- Focus groups
- Town meetings
- Polling
- Study circles

### Key Work of School Boards

In order to understand how a school board fits into a community, it is important to understand what school boards view as important to their work. The National School Boards Association has developed a framework of action areas that aims to help focus and guide school boards in their work. As these key work areas improve, so too does the school board's ability to engage the public and improve student achievement.

**Vision.** A vision statement identifies the school district's future, intermediate and short term goals, associated objectives, and supporting tasks. Developing a shared vision for student achievement is the starting point for a school board and its community.

**Standards.** These statements define and explain educational expectations for all grade levels and support the district's vision statements.

Standards form the foundation for a school district's learning system.

**Assessment.** A sound local assessment system incorporates multiple assessments, alignment with academic standards, coordination with state assessment programs, and both "lagging" and "leading" indicators.

**Accountability.** A strong accountability process focuses on improved student achievement as measured by comprehensive data collection and analysis.

**Alignment.** Resource allocation, communication, planning, and program implementation all work together to support the district's vision, goals, and priorities.

**Climate and Culture.** Climate is the educational environment that creates the conditions for successful teaching and learning, while culture refers to the values and beliefs that shape the school district's behaviors. Through their policies and actions, school district leaders set a leadership tone that greatly influences the attitudes and behaviors of staff and students.

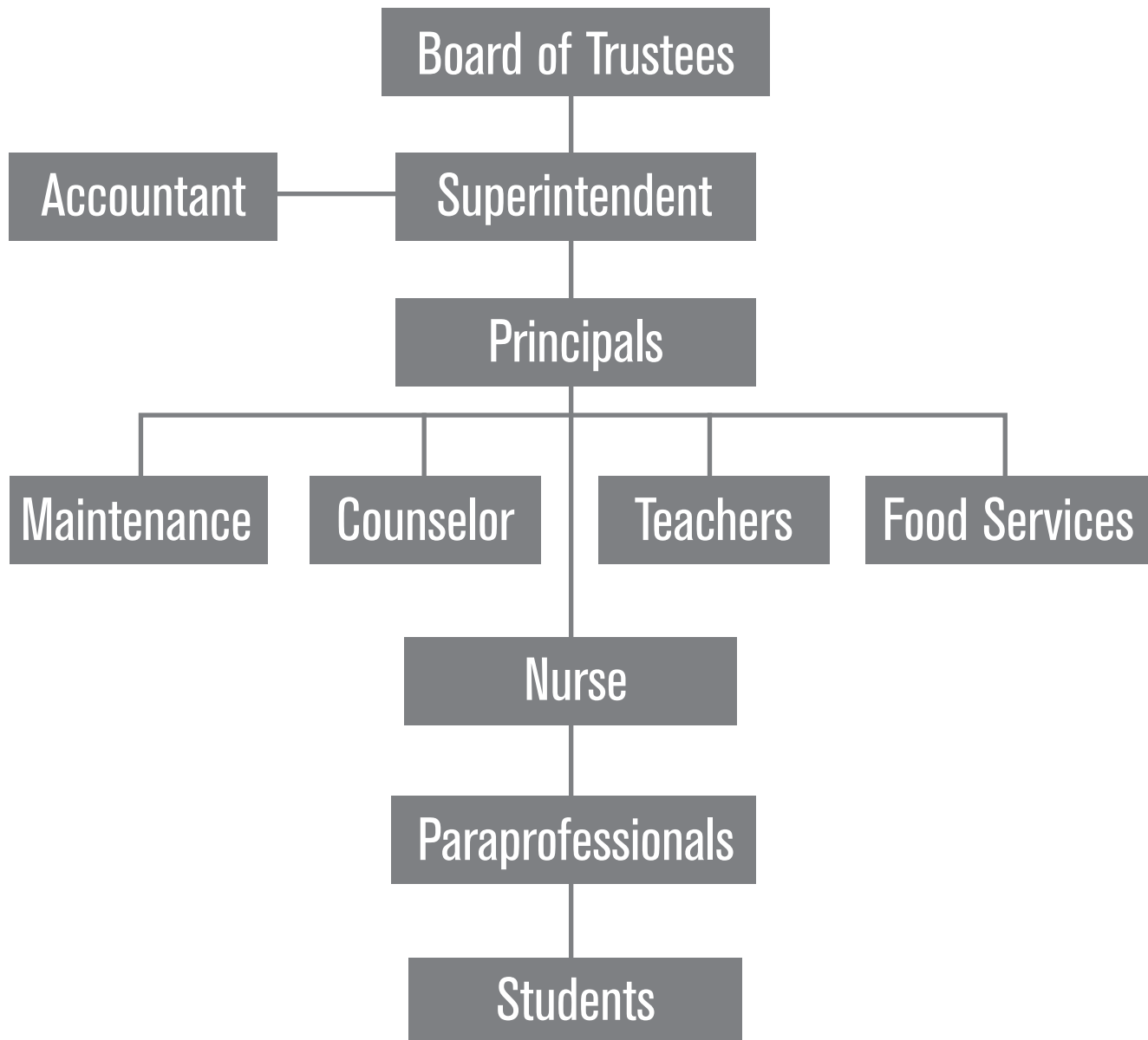
**Collaboration and Community Engagement.** These establish trust and confidence among all educational stakeholders. Necessary partners for school districts include parents, business and political leaders, media representatives, and other citizens in the community.

**Continuous Improvement.** Good data empower the board and staff to refine, strengthen, modify, correct, and/or eliminate existing programs and practices to get better results.

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\* Adapted from National School Boards Association, "Key Work of School Boards," <http://www.nsba.org/MainMenu/Governance/KeyWork.aspx> (accessed December 13, 2010).

## Common School Board Structure





## Appendix D: After Your Visit: Following Up and Maintaining a Relationship\*

The most valuable result of an Advocacy Day might be a new relationship with a member of Congress or a congressional staffer. Developing these new relationships can raise the profile of your organization or your advocacy issue and increase the impact you have on both local and national policy debates. Once you have returned home, send a follow-up letter thanking the member of Congress and his or her staff for spending time with you. Make sure to include materials describing your organization or your advocacy issue and any related current projects. You or your organization may want to try the following to maintain your new relationships:

- Contact your member of Congress when an important bill that affects your community needs his or her attention. You can stay updated on issues affecting the Latino community by signing up for NCLR Action Alerts at [http://www.nclr.org/index.php/take\\_action/sign\\_up\\_for\\_action\\_alerts/](http://www.nclr.org/index.php/take_action/sign_up_for_action_alerts/).
- During the congressional recess, when your members are back in your home state, schedule an in-district visit. Request that the DC staff who work on the issues you discussed during Advocacy Day join the meeting via conference call.
- Invite your member of Congress to attend or speak

at an event you hold in his or her district. This could be an opportunity to demonstrate that what you do directly impacts the congressional member's constituents. If you are a direct service organization, you may want to invite the member to your facilities to view your operations or program and witness your impact firsthand.

- Speak to the congressional member's district staff to find out if there are opportunities for your organization to partner with the congressperson on a town hall meeting that focuses on the issues most important to your organization.
- If you or your organization is profiled in a local or national newspaper, send a clipping of the story to your congressional member's office, letting him or her know that you are interested in the member's opinion on the issue covered in the article. This is another way to engage congressional offices and remind your member of Congress that you are an important newsmaker in his or her district.

\* Adapted from Erika Beltran and Sarah Dolan, *New Leaders, New Directions: Tools for Advancing an Early Childhood Agenda for the Latino Community* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2009)

## Appendix E: Effective TV Interviewing\*

- **Watch TV.** Americans are often stereotyped for watching too much TV, but watching how others handle television interviews is a good way to figure out what works and what does not.
- **Plan Ahead.** Writing out concise talking points beforehand will help you convey your message effectively. Refer to your talking points immediately before the interview to keep them fresh in your mind. (If you need help writing out your talking points, refer to Section IV: of this tool kit for more information).
- **Give Complete Responses.** Never respond with a “yes” or “no.” Speak in complete sentences, especially when replying to a question. You will maximize your chances of being quoted or broadcast accurately if you avoid simply responding with a “yes” or “no.” Also avoid nodding or shaking your head to respond to a question.
- **Look Directly at the Interviewer.** Do not look up at the ceiling when you are thinking of what to say. You will look as if you are not telling the truth. Instead, look down if you need to look away—you will appear thoughtful. Also, try to avoid looking at other items on the set or in the studio, as you will appear nervous and shifty.
- **Sit Still.** Though you do not want to look stiff, do not fidget, rock in your seat, or play with clothing, jewelry, or any other items during the interview. It is distracting and looks unprofessional.
- **Say the Organization’s Full Name.** Although you may have referred to your organization by its full name in the beginning of the interview, it is important to repeat the full name throughout the discussion. You do not know how the interview will be edited, and you want to make sure that you properly name your organization for possible sound bites.
- **Be Energetic.** Although it is good to be relaxed and comfortable on camera, you may appear bored or uninterested if you are too laid back. Stay focused, listen intently, and be passionate in your replies.
- **Do Not Lie.** If you do not know the answer to a question, do not make something up. You will appear to be more knowledgeable and experienced if you explain that your expertise does not extend to that area. If you know of another person or organization that would have the answer, mention it.
- **It is Okay to Repeat Yourself.** In everyday conversation, it is annoying to repeat yourself; however, in an interview, stating your messages more than once in different ways ensures that your messages will be heard.

- **Speak Slowly and Clearly.** Especially when stating information that you want viewers to jot down, slow down and repeat email addresses, website addresses, and phone numbers so that viewers can take down the information.
- **Do Your Homework.** Research the show and interviewer so that you know the probable style of the interview, including the types of questions you may be asked and the format of the segment.
- **Dress Well.** Wear comfortable, professional clothing. Avoid pastels and other light colors, and do not overdo it with accessories such as a busy tie or flashy jewelry.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>4</sup> Pew Hispanic Center, *Educational Attainment: Better Than Meets the Eye, But Large Challenges Remain* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2002), <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/3.pdf> (accessed November 29, 2010).
- <sup>5</sup> Richard Fry and Jeffrey Passel, *Latino Children: A Majority Are U.S.-Born Offspring of Immigrants* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2009), <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1235/latino-children-immigrants-american-born> (accessed November 23, 2010).
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- <sup>7</sup> Hispanic Education Coalition Fiscal Year 2009 Appropriations Recommendations. (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2008).
- <sup>8</sup> NCLR calculation using National Center for Education Statistics, "Public Elementary and Secondary School Student Enrollment and Staff Counts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2007-08," *State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education*. Washington, DC, 2009, [http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010309/tables/table\\_02.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010309/tables/table_02.asp) (accessed November 23, 2010), Table 2.
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- <sup>10</sup> NCLR calculation using 2005–2006 data regarding the number of limited-English-proficient students enrolled in PreK–12 schools from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs; data regarding the percentage of ELL students who speak Spanish from the U.S. Department of Education, *Biennial Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Title III State Formula Grant Program: School Years 2004–06* (2008); and U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2006, "School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students," Table 1.
- <sup>11</sup> Susan Aud, et al., *The Condition of Education 2010* (NCES 2010-028). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC 2010. [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2010/pdf/25\\_2010.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2010/pdf/25_2010.pdf) (accessed November 23, 2010).
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> National Council of La Raza, *Investing in Our Future: The State of Latino Children and Youth* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2009).
- <sup>14</sup> Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee, "Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality," The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, 2005, cited in Alliance for Excellent Education, *Asian Pacific Islander American Students and U.S. High Schools Factsheet* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).
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- <sup>17</sup> Erika Beltran and Sarah Dolan, *New Leaders, New Directions: Tools for Advancing an Early Childhood Agenda for the Latino Community* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2009).
- <sup>18</sup> The Education Trust, *Latino Achievement in America* (Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 2005).
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