



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA CALIFORNIA NCLR AFFILIATE NETWORK

PRESCHOOL FOR ALL: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The educational status of Latino children is a major concern for the Latino community. Throughout the entire “education pipeline,” Latino children lag behind their peers in access, achievement, and attainment. Moreover, improving the academic outcomes of Latino children is a critical issue for California. Latino children are the fastest-growing population in the state. In fact, researchers noted earlier this year that more than one out of every two babies born in California is Latino. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the “pipeline” Latinos are not adequately served. In California, 48% of all children 0-5 years old are Latino, yet less than 25% of these children attend preschool. In addition, early education initiatives often fail to adequately address the quality of early education services for Latino and English language learner (ELL) children, who require linguistically and culturally responsive services to meet school readiness goals.

As policy-makers look to early education as a means to reverse negative trends in our nation’s public schools and promote school readiness for all children, they should understand that the success of these initiatives largely depends on the implementation of policies that address access to and quality of early education and care programs for Latino children. The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Task Force of the California NCLR Affiliate Network (CNAN) support access to high-quality early education for Latino children. However, we urge policy-makers to move forward on Preschool for All (PFA) proposals that address important access barriers and quality issues for Latino children. To achieve this, NCLR and CNAN recommend the following:

Promote access to PFA for Latino and English language learner children by:

- Including an outreach strategy, which targets Latino, immigrant, ELL, and geographically isolated families.
- Prioritizing PFA implementation to school districts with underserved neighborhoods that have a high proportion of schools with the lowest Academic Performance Index (API) rankings.
- Ensuring that PFA programs are full-day, or at a minimum are linked to ECE services for the full day, and available to parents with nontraditional work schedules.

Support culturally and linguistically appropriate high-quality services by:

- Ensuring that the curriculum and assessment tools used in the PFA program are not only developmentally appropriate, but also available in primary languages and are culturally sensitive to the needs of the children.
- Allowing for a mixed service delivery system of PFA services (public/private, center-based, and home-based), which leverages the expertise of community-based organizations to provide and expand PFA services, as well as training and technical assistance, for Latino and ELL children.
- Increasing the pool of highly-qualified bilingual teachers and personnel with expertise in working with Latinos and ELLs by including a bilingual ECE teachers career ladder program.
- Requiring parent involvement and meaningful parent participation in PFA governance functions, in order to enhance parents’ capacity as advocates for their children’s development.
- Ensuring that PFA parent activities and materials are culturally sensitive and provided in their primary language.
- Establishing an ongoing system for monitoring the supply and demand of PFA throughout the state (according to regions, ethnicity, socioeconomic factors, etc.), and for linking and disseminating current ECE research on Latino and ELL issues.
- Ensuring the opportunity for community-based sector involvement by making resources available for facility renovation and/or acquisition, with priority to underserved neighborhoods.

For more information, please contact Cristina Huezo of the NCLR Sacramento Office at (916) 448-9852 at chuezo@nclr.org.