

Recommendations for Latino Student Success

Who We Are: Connecting Practice to Policy

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

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

Background

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

Our Ask

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

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

The Impact

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

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

Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Census Bureau, "School Enrollment in the United States," <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2018/demo/school-enrollment/2018-cps.html> (accessed February 13, 2020), Table 1.
- 2 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics," https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_204.20.asp (accessed January 15, 2020), Table 204.20.
- 3 U.S. Census Bureau, "Data Retrieval: American Community Survey," <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B05003I&hidePreview=true&table=B05003I&tid=ACSDT1Y2018.B05003I&lastDisplayedRow=17&vintage=2018> (accessed January 15, 2020), Table B05003I.
- 4 U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, "English Learners: Demographic Trends". https://ncela.ed.gov/files/fast_facts/19-0193_Del4.4_ELDemographicTrends_021220_508.pdf (accessed 2/21/2020)
- 5 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics," https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_203.50.asp (accessed January 15, 2020), Table 203.50.