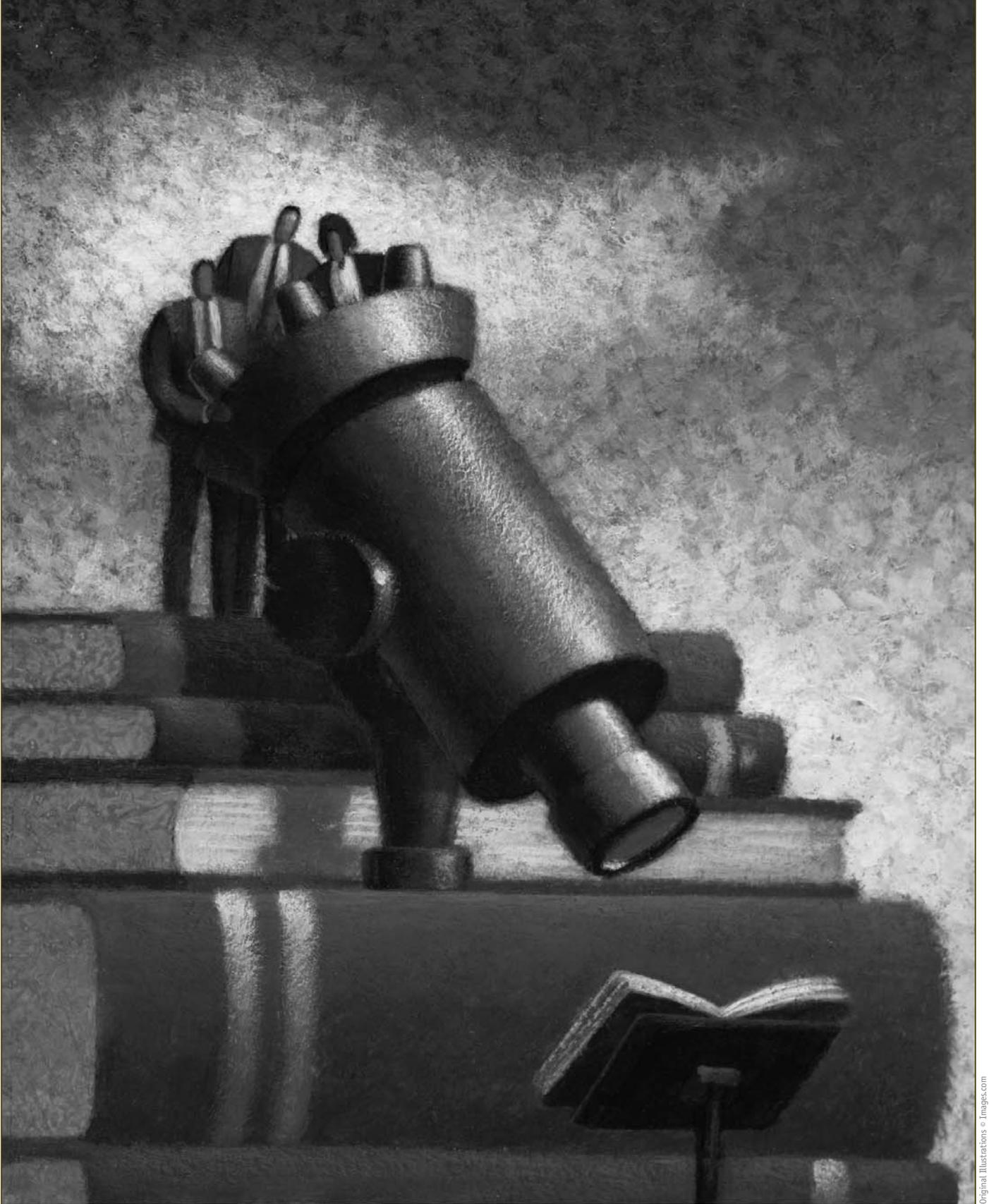

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

CICERO EDUCATION FORUM SUMMARY MARCH 2004





STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS: CICERO EDUCATION FORUM SUMMARY

MARCH 2004



Funded by the MacNeal Health Foundation

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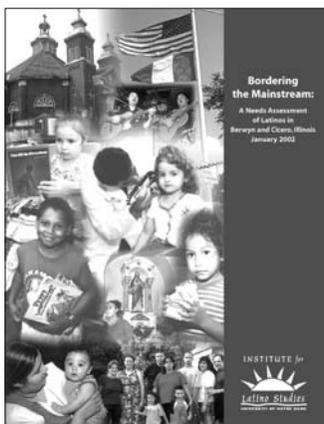
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Located just ten miles from downtown Chicago, Cicero, Illinois serves as a dramatic example of the increase in Latino populations across the United States, especially in suburban areas. In 1980, 9 percent of Cicero's population (5,200 inhabitants) were Latino; today 77 percent of the town's residents (who number over 85,000) are Latino. With more Latinos in its educational systems, Cicero has a unique opportunity to take the lead in developing innovative strategies to increase the educational attainment of all its residents and especially Latinos, who make up the country's fastest-growing and youngest minority group.

This undertaking, however, is no small task and cannot succeed in isolation. Recognizing the need for a collaborative approach, in 2002 the University of Notre Dame's Institute for Latino Studies conducted groundbreaking research aimed at building institutional and community capacity in Cicero. The resulting report, *Bordering the Mainstream: A Needs Assessment of Latinos in Berwyn and Cicero, Illinois*, was based on data from the 2000 US Census and interviews with nearly 200 local community leaders and residents. Conversations with diverse individuals revealed a common conviction: that all stakeholders must adopt innovative and inclusive approaches to improve the quality of life in Cicero.



Committed to progress in the area of education, which the study highlighted as a top priority, a working group of organizations concerned with education in Cicero came together. After a planning period, they organized the first-ever Cicero Education Forum in November 2002 with the support of academic leaders, teachers, parents, students, and other members of the community. Over 120 people attended the forum, where they heard



presentations of key statistics and explored ideas for institutional and community collaboration to identify the best practices for bringing out the gifts of students and their families in Cicero. The following is an overview of important facts:

- ❖ With nearly 13,000 students enrolled in K–8 schools, student enrollment has increased by 17 percent since 1997 and by 74 percent since 1990.
- ❖ In 2002 10 out of 15 Cicero district elementary schools were on the Illinois Academic Watch List, as was Morton East High School.
- ❖ Although over 9,500 children of ages 0–5 live in Cicero, there are only 12 Head Start classrooms. Research shows that access to programs like Head Start promotes social and developmental skills.
- ❖ 64 percent of students enter high school with reading skills below the 9th grade level.



- ❖ 75 percent of students enter high school with math skills below the 9th grade level.

Participants at the November 2002 forum agreed that education is the key to improving the quality of life for residents in Cicero. After dialogue and exchange, participants identified the following priority areas for future efforts:

- ❖ Increase early childhood care and education.
- ❖ Increase parental participation.
- ❖ Increase college access and completion.
- ❖ Raise expectations of students, parents, and faculty.
- ❖ Continue to address overcrowding in Cicero schools.

In April 2003 the working group convened a second Cicero Education Forum, this time to ratify strategies for collaborating with key educational stakeholders to pursue quality education for the residents of Cicero. Participants in the April forum recommended the following strategies:

- ❖ Create a community task force of parents, students, educational institutions, and other stakeholders charged with the implementation of proposed strategies from Cicero Education Forums.
- ❖ Request that institutions in Cicero fund an education coordinator for a minimum of two years to oversee these efforts.
- ❖ Request that each school district develop a plan during the 2003–04 school year addressing the above priority areas.



- ❖ Begin strategy implementation by November 1, 2003.
- ❖ Convene a multi-district steering committee with representation from Cicero School District 99, Morton School District 201, and Community College District 52.7.
- ❖ Convene educational stakeholders on an annual basis to assess the educational progress of students in Cicero schools.

The following pages describe in greater detail the recommendations that grew out of this collaborative effort to improve educational opportunities in Cicero. Community residents and local institutions share a common vision and commitment as stakeholders in the town's educational system. Working together, they can draw on Cicero's rich history and ethnic traditions to foster schools that draw strength from diversity. If they succeed, Cicero may serve as a model for other growing communities striving to build a better future for new Latino residents.



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I. SUMMARY OF CICERO EDUCATION FORUMS



LATINO EDUCATIONAL STATUS

Education is undeniably a path to upward mobility, yet Latino access to this path remains limited. The United States is increasingly dependent upon the success of Latinos, both for its labor supply and for the contribution Latinos make to the social security of retirees. Despite this fact, Latinos are the least formally educated group in the nation today, and many Latino youth lack the basic skills and knowledge required for economic and social mobility in today's economy. Following are some key facts about Latinos nationally:¹

- ❖ Only 10 percent percent of Latinos from ages 25 to 29 have a college degree, compared to 32 percent of non-Hispanic Whites.

- ❖ In 2000 the Latino dropout rate was 27.8 percent, or twice that of Black students (13.1 percent) and four times that of Whites (6.9 percent).²
- ❖ Educational levels of immigrant and US-born Latino students differ significantly, and 44.2 percent of immigrant Latino youth are high school dropouts.

Illinois is one of the states where the Latino population has increased dramatically (to approximately 1.5 million by 2000) and with it, the Latino school-aged population. Cicero has mirrored this growth, with the school-aged population increasing by over 5,000 students in the last decade, growing from 7,470 in 1990 to 12,972 in 2001—an increase of 74 percent.³

¹ Sources for the data presented here are the National Hispanic Scholarship Fund and the National Center for Educational Statistics.

² National Center for Educational Statistics. Percentage based on 16- through 24-year-olds who were dropouts in 2000.

³ Analysis of Illinois State Report Card Data for each year between 1990 and 2002, by the University of Notre Dame, Institute for Latino Studies.

Recent findings from the Institute for Latino Studies' report *Bordering the Mainstream: A Needs Assessment of Latinos in Berwyn and Cicero, Illinois* point to many of the issues that impede educational success in Cicero. The study found, for example, that there is a severe shortage of Latino teachers and administrators in the public schools to serve as role models and effectively communicate with parents. School systems are struggling to cope with the number of new children and their special language and immigration-related needs. A substantial number of children perform below state and national norms on standardized tests and a significant number of youth drop out of high school. Recent data on Cicero indicate:

- ❖ Only 36.7 percent of Latino adults have a high school degree compared to 71.8 percent of non-Hispanic Whites.⁴
- ❖ Only 3.8 percent of Latino adults have a college degree compared to 9.4 percent of non-Hispanic Whites.⁵
- ❖ Illinois State Board of Education Report Card data indicate that in the 2002–2003 school year only 36.8 percent of Cicero 8th graders met or exceeded Illinois standards in reading and 28.8 percent in math, compared to 68 percent and 52.5 percent of all Illinois 8th graders respectively.⁶
- ❖ At Morton East High School in the 2002–2003 school year, only 27.8 percent of students met or exceeded Illinois standards in reading and 25.5 percent in math, compared to 56.4 percent and 53.3 percent of all Illinois high school students respectively.⁷
- ❖ In Cicero School District 99 nearly half, or 48.2 percent, of children enrolled are limited English proficient, and nearly 70 percent are low income.⁸

⁴ Analysis of Census 2000 data by the University of Notre Dame, Institute for Latino Studies. See Appendix C.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Illinois State Board of Education Report Card data, 2002–2003. See Appendix B.

⁷ Illinois State Board of Education Report Card data, 2002–2003, See also Appendix B.

⁸ Illinois State Board of Education Report Card data, 2001–2002, See also Appendix B.

In many ways Cicero is unique—it has the largest number and concentration of Latino school children outside of Chicago. Over 90 percent of the student body are Latino and 10 of the 15 schools in Cicero School District 99 were on early academic warning in 2002. Morton East High School was also on early academic warning in 2002.

At the same time, in Cicero and throughout the Chicago metropolitan area, common needs exist. Too many Latino children do not have access to early childhood education, relations between schools and parents need to be strengthened, schools need more bilingual and bicultural personnel, and parents need to be more involved in the schools.

In addition, much more could be done to ensure that Latinos are better oriented to the college enrollment process. A great deal of research has already indicated steps that might be taken to improve the life-chances of Cicero students and students in many other suburban communities with new waves of Latino residents.

CICERO EDUCATION FORUM

On November 18, 2002, parents, students, educators, and community-based organizations came together at the Cicero Education Forum to discuss and prioritize the education needs of the Cicero community.

The objectives of the November 2002 forum were to:

- ❖ demonstrate community support for an improved education system in Cicero;
- ❖ provide an opportunity for dialogue among parents, students, educators, and community-based organizations;
- ❖ provide an overview of recent education research findings in Cicero;
- ❖ identify educational issues, priorities, recommendations, and next steps for a community strategic planning process.

A diverse working group of organizations convened this unprecedented event, including:

- ❖ Cicero School District 99 (Elementary)
- ❖ J. S. Morton High School District 201 (High School)
- ❖ J. S. Morton East High School
- ❖ the Interfaith Leadership Project
- ❖ Morton College
- ❖ the Neighborhood Center of Cicero
- ❖ the University of Notre Dame, Institute for Latino Studies
- ❖ Parents United for Responsible Education
- ❖ the Progress Center for Independent Living
- ❖ SER Jobs for Progress
- ❖ the Small School Project/University of Illinois–Chicago

Columbus West Elementary School hosted the forum.⁹ Over 120 teachers, parents, administrators, and community members attended the event. They were oriented to the overall educational status of students in the Cicero public schools (see Appendices A, B, C). Participants then broke into small groups to identify priorities within education as well as their vision and goals for improving schools in the Cicero community. Participants indicated the following top five priority areas of concern in education:

1. Early childhood education
2. Parental participation
3. College access and completion
4. Raising expectations and academic achievement
5. Overcrowding

Beginning in November 2002 representatives of the aforementioned groups met to translate the concerns expressed in the forum into a plan for action. A committee has drafted the vision, goals, background, and strategies that will inform future work in each of the top five priority areas.¹⁰ This report presents those documents as well as a brief overview of other educational issues identified at the forum.

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

Each of the strategies in the top five issue areas suggests a path for action that can be taken to improve educational outcomes for students. Forum participants suggested these strategies, which represent a collective response to the current educational system and a vision for improving it. Hopefully, implementation of these strategies will foster dialogue and action among parents, teachers, administrators, public policymakers, foundations, and other interested parties so that all children in Cicero will be prepared to succeed. Clearly, this effort will require coordination among the various stakeholders in the Cicero community. Hence, in a collaborative spirit, we propose the following overarching recommendations:¹¹

- ❖ Create a community task force composed of parents, students, educational institutions, and community stakeholders to implement the proposed strategies in all areas identified. To facilitate success, fund a coordinator for this effort.
- ❖ Request that each school develop a plan to implement the proposed strategies in early childhood education, parental participation, college access and completion, raising expectations, and overcrowding in order to ensure continued dialogue.
- ❖ Convene a multi-district steering committee comprised of representatives of the three area school districts—elementary district 99, high school district 201, and community college district 527—to respond to the proposed strategies identified in this document in order to maximize resources and ensure a coordinated educational strategy for children at all stages of the educational pipeline.
- ❖ Convene education stakeholders on an annual basis to promote community building; assess progress on implementing strategies identified in this plan; and celebrate educational successes as an ongoing commitment to the children of Cicero.

⁹ The planners of the Cicero Education Forum are grateful to Joyce Hoden and to District 99 for their support.

¹⁰ Produced by the Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame in collaboration with the Interfaith Leadership Project, Parents United for

Responsible Education, Morton College, J.S. Morton East HS, the Neighborhood Center, SER Jobs for Progress, the Progress Center, and the League of United Latin American Citizens

¹¹ Ibid.

SECOND EDUCATION FORUM

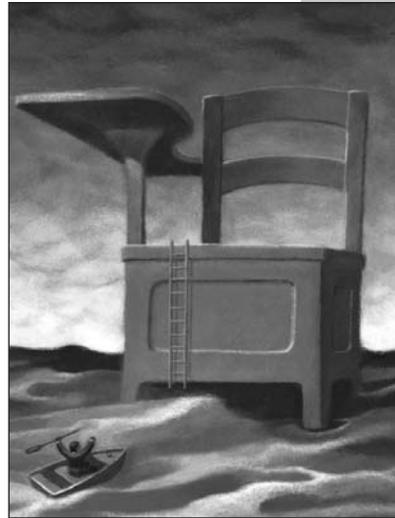
At the second Cicero Education Forum, held on April 22, 2003, over 80 participants ratified the vision, goals, background, and strategies for success in each of the five priority areas: early childhood education, parental participation, college access and completion, raising expectations and academic achievement, and overcrowding. They further clarified which of the strategies originally identified at the November 18 forum were their priority strategies. These priorities will provide guidance to any individual or organization that is interested in improving the educational outcomes for Cicero school children. Finally, participants affirmed the four overarching strategies aimed at enhancing communication and accountability among all Cicero education stakeholders.

In these historic forums parents, educators, and community members engaged in an unprecedented dialogue to discuss their children's future and chart a path to increased educational attainment. Participants were engaged, motivated, and full of ideas. They exemplify and provide tangible evidence of the commitment that parents, educators, and community members bring to building a bright future for Cicero school children.

The following section outlines the vision, goals, background, and strategies defined for each priority area. The strategies were discussed at the April 22 forum where participants organized them into priority strategies and additional strategies.



II. PRIORITY EDUCATION ISSUES



A. LATINO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN CICERO

VISION

Every child in Cicero from age birth to five will have access to early childhood care and education.

GOAL

Provide quality early childhood education and care in Cicero that is affordable, accessible, parent-friendly, and prepares children for school.

BACKGROUND

Today 10 percent of Latinos are under the age of five and make up over 15 percent of all children in this age group in the US population. In Cicero these numbers are even more dramatic: 12.8 percent of Latinos are under the age

of five, and 92 percent of all children under 5 are Latino. The 2000 Census reported 9,737 children under the age of five living in Cicero.

By the year 2030 Latino children under the age of five will make up 25 percent of the total national school-age population. If these children do not receive quality early childhood care and education, there is a high probability they will enter kindergarten unprepared to learn. Statistics highlight the seriousness of the situation:

- ❖ Research informs us that young Latino children are not at a level with their peers. For example, 61 percent of Latino four-year-olds are able to identify basic colors compared to 91 percent of White children.¹²
- ❖ Participating in early childhood programs, such as Head Start, can better prepare a child to enter

¹² *Our Nation on the Fault Line: Hispanic American Education*, September 1996. Report from the President of the Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans.



kindergarten. Yet in 2001 less than 40 percent (39.8 percent) of Latino children age 3–5 were enrolled in center-based early childhood care and education programs, compared to 63.7 percent of Black and 59.0 percent of White children.¹³

- ❖ One factor related to the lack of enrollment in early childcare and education programs is access to these programs. Many Latino communities lack the number of slots and facilities needed to meet the demands. The Illinois Facilities Fund reports that the Children’s Center is the only Head Start grantee in Cicero and has only 12 classrooms. There are a few remaining childcare facilities, three of which are for-profit.

At the Cicero Education Forum, held on November 18, 2002, community parents, teachers, students, and administrators ranked early childhood education as the top priority issue, receiving 20 percent of the votes. Participants’ concerns included children not being ready to learn when they begin kindergarten, not enough early

childhood classes, and the needs for more funding and parental education to promote investment in children. At the second Cicero Education Forum, held on April 22, 2003, participants identified the following priority strategies and additional strategies to create more early childhood education and care in Cicero.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- ❖ Create and facilitate the development of more early childhood education and care facilities including family childcare homes.
- ❖ Provide parent education to promote early childhood development of children.
- ❖ Develop a state-of-the-art early childhood family resource center.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

- ❖ Increase funding for early childhood education and care to ensure affordability and accessibility of services.
- ❖ Increase the pool of qualified and professional staff for early childhood education and care facilities.
- ❖ Promote mandatory parental involvement of both public and private facilities.

¹³ National Center for Education Statistics, 2002.

B. LATINO PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN CICERO

VISION

Partners for Success: School communities in which parents are active, knowledgeable, and valued partners with teachers, counselors, and administrators; all work together to ensure student success in all Cicero schools in an environment of mutual support among parents and teachers.

GOAL

All parents in Cicero will have access to their child’s school, are able to communicate with educators and administrators in their home language, be aware of their child’s academic progress at all times, knowledgeable of their rights as parents, and informed about how to ensure their child’s academic success.

BACKGROUND

Parental involvement is a significant factor in students’ academic outcomes. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (1999), 44 percent of students whose grades are mostly A/B stated their parents are very involved in their education as opposed to 25 percent of students with grades worse than C. Cicero school districts have limited opportunities for parental participation.

- ❖ In District 201, the only existing parent organization is the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). There are several PTO’s among the 15 schools in District 99.¹⁴

¹⁴ District 201 and District 99, April 2003.

- ❖ As of 2002 none of the Board of Education members for Districts 201 and 99 had children enrolled in Cicero schools.¹⁵
- ❖ At Morton East High School ten parent-oriented events are held throughout the year. Two of the events are for the entire school and eight are geared toward the parents of freshmen students.¹⁶

At the Cicero Education Forum held on November 18, 2002, community members, parents, students, teachers, and administrators ranked parental participation as one of the top priority issues. Participants' concerns included the lack of parental involvement for all grades and limited ability to speak English as a challenge for communication. At the second Cicero Education Forum, held on April 22, 2003, participants identified the following priority strategies and additional strategies to promote increased Latino parental participation in Cicero.

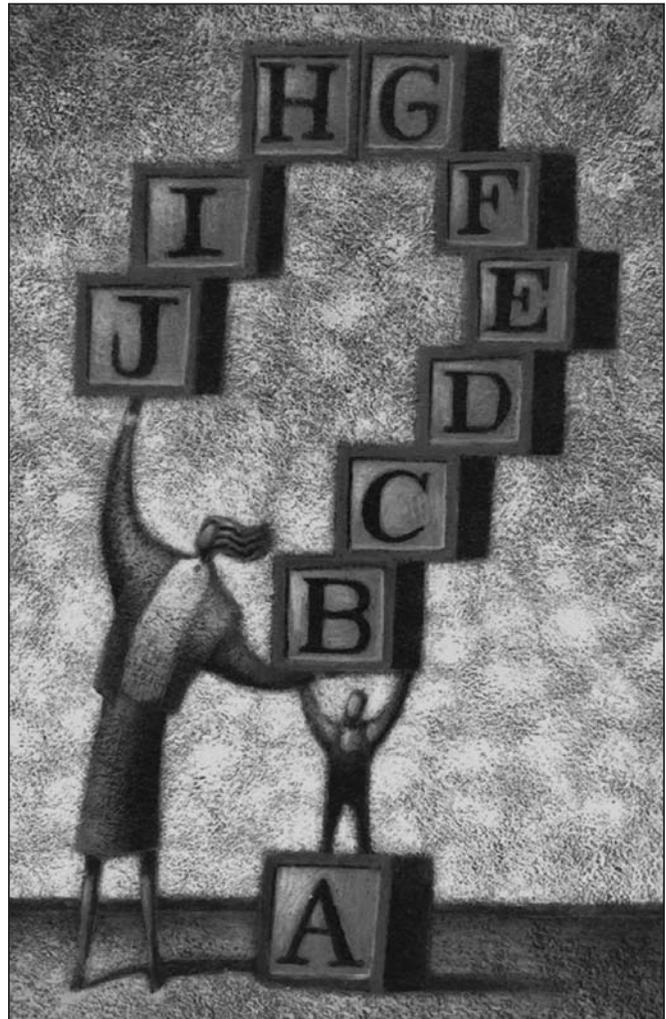
PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- ❖ Offer workshops for parents to help them understand their rights under the No Child Left Behind Act. Additionally, offer workshops organized by parent advocates to educate parents in their home language on how they can help their children, regardless of their educational level. Develop workshops that address various issues (possible topics include graduation requirements, post-secondary planning, interpreting test scores, safety concerns, and special education).
- ❖ Establish parent advocacy offices at each school staffed with empowered 'parent advocates' to address parent/student educational and social concerns and to take part in the decision-making process at each school.

- ❖ Develop a parent resource center in schools.
- ❖ Create more opportunities for parent-teacher interaction (e.g., parent-teacher conferences, reading nights, family nights, parent classroom aides, homework sessions).

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

- ❖ Ensure that the Boards of Education for Districts 201 and 99 have members who are parents of children enrolled in Cicero schools at time of service.
- ❖ Increase home-to-school proximity and decrease number of schools per family (i.e., no family should have children in 3 or 4 different schools) in order to facilitate parent involvement and improve safety.
- ❖ Provide access to ESL and GED classes for parents at various times throughout the day and in several locations around town.



¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ District 201, April 2003.

C. COLLEGE ACCESS AND COMPLETION FOR LATINO STUDENTS

VISION

Every high school student in Cicero will have access to higher education.

GOAL

All educational institutions will prepare all students to be college ready and college literate, as well as assist students in obtaining the necessary resources to complete their post-secondary education.



BACKGROUND

Research has shown a direct correlation between parental educational attainment and students' educational outcomes. In Cicero 71.8 percent of White/non-Latinos are high school graduates (including high school diploma equivalency).¹⁷ In comparison, 36.7 percent of Latinos aged 25 and over are high school graduates or equivalent. Similarly, 9.4 percent of White/non-Latinos have completed a bachelor's degree or higher in comparison to 3.8 percent of Latinos.¹⁸ Increasing the educational attainment of Latinos students will improve their economic and social mobility, which benefits the community as a whole.

- ❖ In 2002 the graduation rate of Morton East High School was 68.6 percent, whereas the state's average was 85.2 percent.¹⁹ In 2003 Morton East's graduation rate improved to 82.4 percent.²⁰
- ❖ Currently there is no comprehensive tracking system for college applications and enrollment at Morton East High School.²¹
- ❖ Although over 700 students took the ACT in 2002 in District 201, there were only 25 seats available for pre-ACT classes.²²
- ❖ The average composite ACT score at Morton East is 16.0, whereas the state's average composite ACT is 20.²³

At the Cicero Education Forum, held on November 18, 2002, community members, parents, students, teachers, and administrators ranked college access and completion as one of the top priority issues. Participants' concerns included the need for more assistance in gaining access to a college education, more college preparation at all levels in high school, and making college costs affordable and accessible. At the second Cicero Education Forum, held on April 22, 2003, participants identified the following priority strategies and additional strategies to promote college access and completion for Cicero students.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- ❖ Research local, state, and federal laws and services, and identify improved ways to help students obtain economic resources for college, regardless of immigration status.
- ❖ Secure federal, state, local, and private funding to develop and implement pre-college readiness programs.
- ❖ Create a Latino scholarship program for Cicero students.

¹⁷ Hispanics may be of any race. While the terms 'Hispanic' and 'Latino' are used interchangeably in this report, the Institute for Latino Studies prefers the use of the term 'Latino'.

¹⁸ Analysis of Census 2000 data by the University of Notre Dame, Institute for Latino Studies.

¹⁹ Illinois State Board of Education Report Card data, 2001–2002.

²⁰ Illinois State Board of Education Report Card data, 2002–2003.

²¹ Morton East High School, April 2003.

²² Ibid.

²³ Illinois State Board of Education Report Card data, 2002–2003.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

- ❖ Integrate college readiness into the curriculum and culture of schools focusing on grades six through community college.
- ❖ Provide more access to pre-ACT and SAT courses.
- ❖ Develop strategies to recruit and retain Latino role models at all schools.
- ❖ Create an inter-district task force composed of parents, students, and educational institutions to design and create strategies to improve education.
- ❖ Develop an ongoing staff development program for counseling staff to provide better services to educate Latino students.
- ❖ Create a college and career office that includes assistance with completing admissions, financial aid, and scholarship applications in high schools.
- ❖ Adopt a Teach for America program in high school for administrative and faculty positions.
- ❖ Create more effective guidance programs based on national best practices for diverse students, which ensure that students and families are college literate.

D. RAISING EXPECTATIONS OF ALL STUDENTS IN CICERO

VISION

Parents, teachers, principals/administrators, members of Boards of Education, students, and community members will have high expectations of Latino students, and every child will have support, opportunity, and confidence to learn to his/her highest potential.

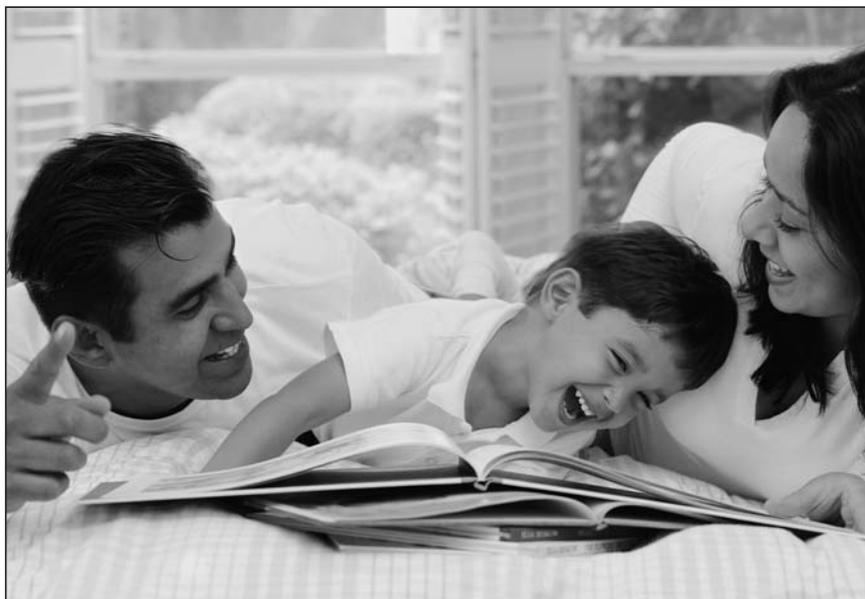
GOAL

An educational environment in which the parents, teachers, faculty, staff, principals/administrators, members of Boards of Education, students, and community members have high expectations of and respect for students, which in turn will foster student self-esteem, self-expression, and high self-expectations.

BACKGROUND

Research has shown that there are clear links between educational success and factors such as poverty, parental educational status, and level of English language proficiency. Cicero students are especially challenged in this regard.

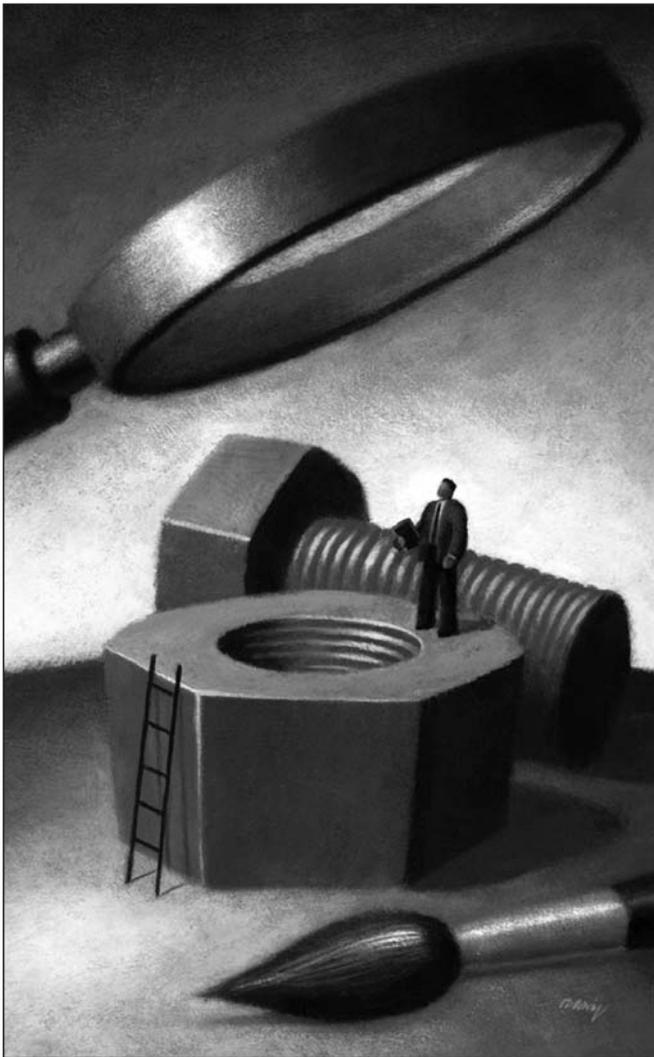
For example, if parents have low levels of educational attainment, their children are at higher risk of not completing high school or not entering college. Hence, in order to be proactive, schools with high numbers of children who fit this educational profile must undertake targeted and focused interventions to create a culture of educational success. As one example, a nearby private school, Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, has a student population that in many cases mirrors that of Cicero. Yet nearly 80 percent of recent graduating classes are continuing their studies in colleges and universities.²⁴ Cristo Rey has created a culture in which the dominant



²⁴ Cristo Rey website www.cristorey.net.

norms have been shifted and each student is expected to apply to college.

At the Cicero Education Forum held on November 18, 2002, community members, parents, students, teachers, and administrators ranked low expectations of students as a top priority issue. Participants' concerns included children being promoted although they are not at grade level and the need for stronger and consistent communication between School Districts 99 and 201. Participants recommended that the districts set the goal that 85 percent of Cicero students meet/exceed state standards by 2010. At the second Cicero Education Forum, held on April 22, 2003, participants identified the following priority strategies and additional strategies to promote high expectations and respect for students.



PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- ❖ Improve work/study, internships, and apprenticeships to provide pathways to career opportunities including protecting vocational training.
- ❖ Create an environment in which students are part of the solution and not perceived as the problem.
- ❖ Ensure that students have roles on decision-making boards and committees.
- ❖ Encourage schools to incorporate community service projects for students.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

- ❖ Design opportunities for teachers and students to interact, such as home rooms and advisory times.
- ❖ Design mentor programs that increase self-esteem and promote student leadership at all grade levels.
- ❖ Increase professional development and opportunities for faculty to help them better understand the impact of teacher expectations on student achievement.
- ❖ Establish teacher and administrator home visits.
- ❖ Commission a task force to determine the reasons for low student performance and high failure rates.
- ❖ Provide leadership training for students.
- ❖ Create a better transition from eighth grade to high school.
- ❖ Develop a task force to address teenage pregnancy.
- ❖ Create the position of job developer in the high school to help students obtain jobs to address immediate financial needs.
- ❖ Create the position of career counselor/developer.
- ❖ Increase school-funded extracurricular activities such as intramural sports and clubs and target students who do not have the opportunity to participate in district athletic teams.

E. OVERCROWDING IN PREDOMINANTLY LATINO SCHOOLS

VISION

Cicero schools will have smaller class sizes and smaller schools to provide quality interaction among students, teachers and parents, which will promote effective teaching and increase student achievement.

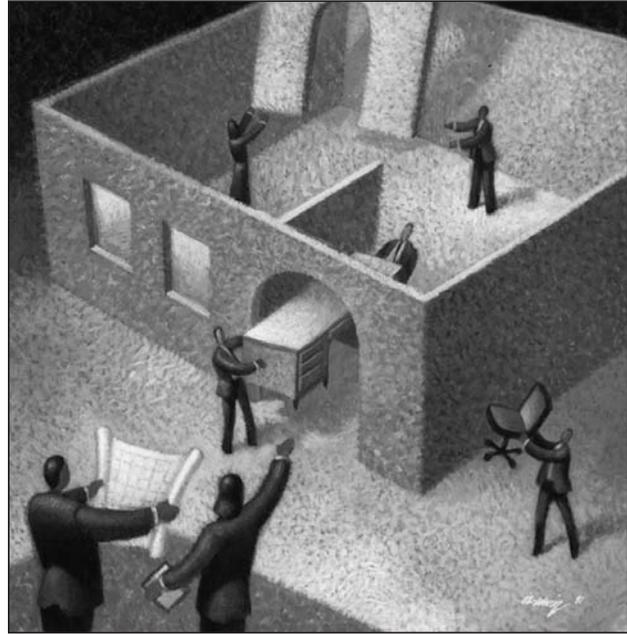
GOAL

Every Cicero classroom will have a student/teacher ratio of no more than 15 to 1, as supported by the National Education Association, and every school will implement smaller learning communities.

BACKGROUND

Parents, teachers, and education researchers have strongly and consistently supported reducing class size. More than 75 percent of teachers in large schools feel overcrowding is a problem in their school versus less than 25 percent of teachers in small schools. More than half of teachers in large high schools report that students fall through the cracks versus less than one third of teachers in small high schools.²⁵

❖ Despite research indicating that the ideal academic environment is a small school, Cicero has two schools with enrollment at or over 3,000 students. While the new Unity Junior High School can accommodate 4,000 students, it admitted nearly 3,000 students in fall of 2003.²⁶ To address this, Unity School has organized the school environment to promote 16 small learning communities in which students maintain the same teachers for their core classes and travel to their core classes in a section of a single corridor of the building.²⁷ In addition, in 2002 Morton East High School had a total enrollment of 3,797



students.²⁸ To address this, Morton East will open the Freshman Center in the fall of 2004, a separate building to house approximately 1,000 freshmen.²⁹

- ❖ The average class size at Morton East High School is 19.4 students per class versus an average of 17.6 for the state.³⁰
- ❖ In 1995 total enrollment in District 99 was 10,227 and in 2000 it was 12,577, an increase of 23 percent. Enrollment for J.S. Morton East High School District 201 was 5,634 in 1995 and 6,594 in 2000, an increase of 17 percent.³¹
- ❖ Current demographic trends indicate a growing Latino population in Cicero, which may require additional classrooms. For example, in the 2002 school year there were approximately 1,865 kindergarteners and 1,965 potential kindergarteners for the 2003–04 academic year, a growth of 100 students.³²

²⁵ Public Agenda, 2002.

²⁶ McSherry, Meg Breslin. "Cicero hopes big school is a megahit, not colossal flop." *Chicago Tribune*, May 8, 2003.

²⁷ Conversation with Unity School principal.

²⁸ Illinois State Board of Education Report Card data, 2001–2002.

²⁹ Conversation with Morton East principal.

³⁰ Illinois State Board of Education Report Card Data, 2002–2003.

³¹ Illinois State Board of Education School Report Cards 1995 and 2000.

³² Analysis of Census 2000 data by the University of Notre Dame, Institute for Latino Studies.

At the Cicero Education Forum held on November 18, 2002, community members, parents, students, teachers, and administrators ranked overcrowding in Cicero schools as one of the top priority issues. Participants' concerns included the need for more classrooms, class sizes of less than 30 students, and the building of additional schools. At the second Cicero Education Forum, held on April 22, 2003, participants identified the following priority strategies and additional strategies to address overcrowding in Cicero schools.

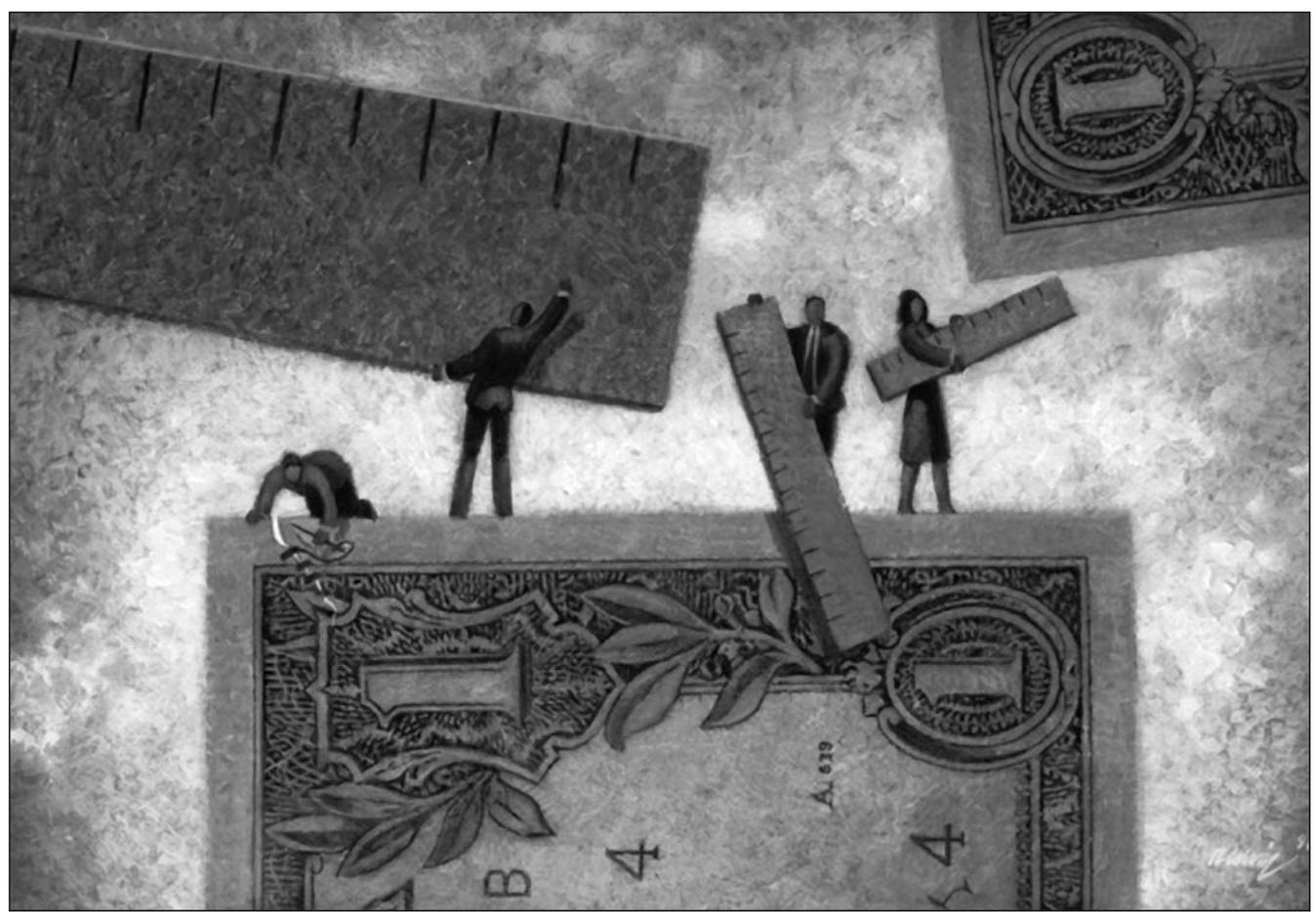
PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- ❖ Create Smaller Learning Communities within large school buildings because it will help teachers to teach to students' individual needs and abilities.
- ❖ Ensure ongoing evaluation and effectiveness of all Smaller Learning Communities.

- ❖ Create a funding strategy and seek resources to build more schools to reduce class size, based on planning and projected growth.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

- ❖ Expand educational offerings such as art, music, gym, and technology, which are currently limited due to lack of space.
- ❖ Ensure ongoing evaluation on the correlation between large school size and educational outcomes.
- ❖ Reduce bussing and foster school community interaction by having various programs (K-8, bilingual, pre-K, and specialized programs) in one building, consistent with population demographics and needs.



III. ADDITIONAL EDUCATION ISSUES



At the November 18, 2002, educational forum, participants also identified the following issues. While they were not among the top five priorities previously discussed, they are presented here as important education issues raised by parents, teachers, and administrators.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

- ❖ Interpreters for parent conferences
- ❖ Dual-language approach from kindergarten onward
- ❖ Better trained teachers
- ❖ Funding for more assistance in education
- ❖ Teachers should have aides in every classroom.
- ❖ Teachers need to hold back students if they are not doing well.
- ❖ Increased communication on all these issues
- ❖ Making students understand the values of getting great scores

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

- ❖ After-school activities, facilities for sports and music.
- ❖ After-school tutoring and homework help in elementary school

TEACHER QUALITY

- ❖ Need for accountability with educators, students, parents, community, and administrators for the academic achievement and success for all students regardless of the barriers that exist in Cicero
- ❖ Hiring practices
- ❖ Lack of teacher preparation
- ❖ There is a large population of Latinos in Cicero, but few Latino teachers. Also, teachers who are Hispanic are often from countries other than Mexico.
- ❖ Expand teaching scholarships
- ❖ More effective counseling in high school for teachers

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

- ❖ Expand pool of bilingual and Latino teachers
- ❖ Books at home
- ❖ ESL for parents in the school beyond Level 1
- ❖ Explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of the bilingual program
- ❖ There is a need for students to make a transition from monolingual (Spanish) to only English.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

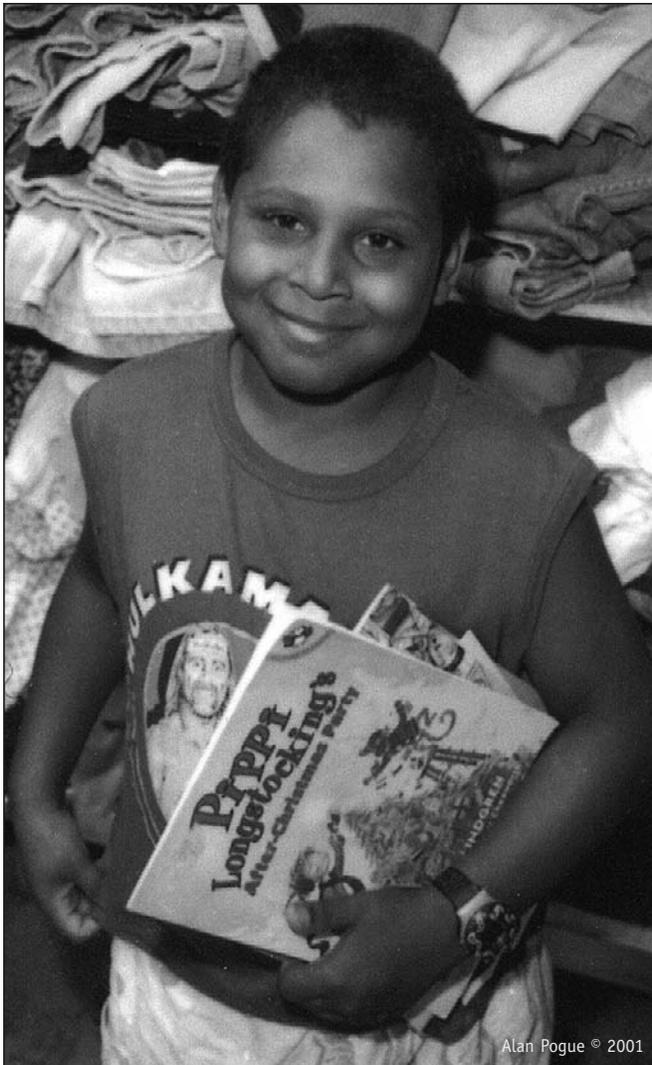
- ❖ Lack of Special Education teachers certified in Special Ed. and CPR
- ❖ Special Ed. and regular teachers must be certified.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE BARRIERS

- ❖ Language needs and cultural conflicts. The school system struggles to cope with the number of students and their language needs, while adults (whether they are parents or educators) have cultural conflicts with children.
- ❖ Link between school and home: Language (communication) and culture (blending of not just two cultures but many (Asian, Arab, Latinos other than Mexicans, etc.)
- ❖ Priorities (what's important?) Reading? School? Relationships? Family?
- ❖ Participation of all in education

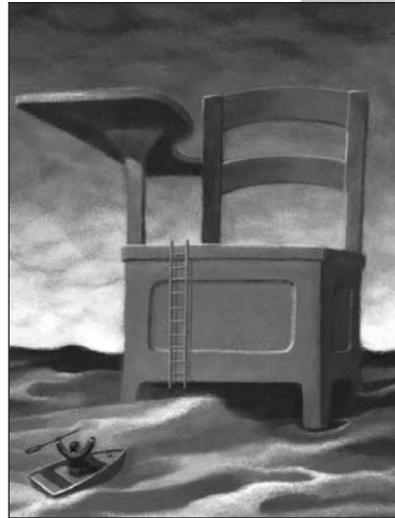
HIGH SCHOOL

- ❖ Teens having babies





IV. APPENDICES

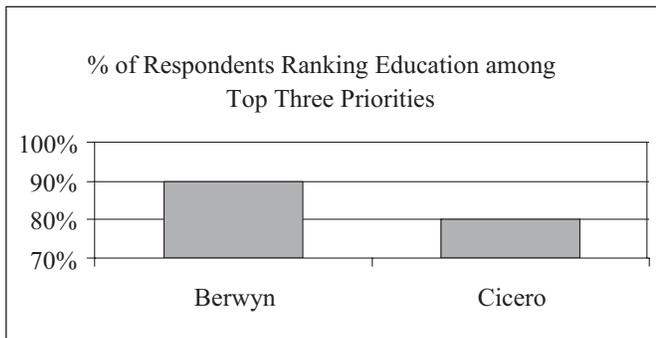


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- A. *Bordering the Mainstream* education highlights
 - B. Status of Cicero education, 2001; updated 2002 and 2003
 - C. Educational status 2000
 - D. Cicero education forum agenda
 - E. Cicero education forum flyer
 - F. Cicero education overview
 - G. Second Cicero education forum agenda
 - H. Second Cicero education forum flyer

A. PRELIMINARY WORK: *BORDERING THE MAINSTREAM*

In their report, *Bordering the Mainstream: A Needs Assessment of Latinos in Berwyn and Cicero, Illinois*, the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame found the following:

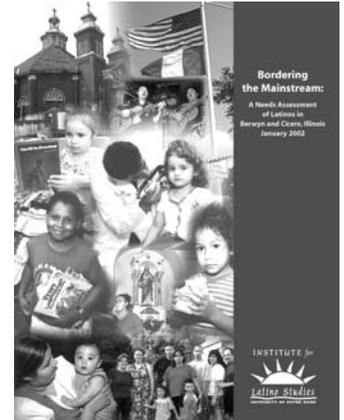
- ❖ 90 percent of Berwyn respondents and 80 percent of Cicero respondents ranked education as a main concern.
- ❖ This is important because in Cicero and Berwyn only 52 percent of Latino adults have completed high school and only 2 percent have completed college (Metro Chicago Information Center).*



CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND EDUCATION

- ❖ The school-age population in Berwyn and Cicero has grown tremendously, with 16,000 new children added to the population in the 1990s.
- ❖ The school system is struggling to cope with the number of new students and their special language and immigration-related needs.
- ❖ There is a severe shortage of Latino teachers and administrators in the public schools to serve as role models and effectively communicate with parents.
- ❖ Relations between schools and parents need to be strengthened, schools need more bilingual and bicultural personnel, and parents need to become more involved with the schools.
- ❖ There are substantial numbers of children who are below state and national norms on standardized tests and a significant number of youth who drop out of high school. Career counseling and college enrollment are other needs.

* It is important to note that this data was taken from a sample survey. Census 2000 indicates that in Cicero only 36.7 percent of Latino adults have finished high school and only 3.8 percent have completed college.



- ❖ There are limited numbers of childcare and early childhood education providers in the Berwyn and Cicero community.
- ❖ Many young Latinas are having children while still in high school.
- ❖ Latino youth need after-school recreational opportunities that are relevant to their cultural experience and in which they feel welcome to participate.
- ❖ Youth gang activity is extensive and is a high concern for many parents.
- ❖ There is a cultural conflict between immigrant parents and their 'Americanized' children.
- ❖ There is often a cultural divide between non-immigrant adults such as teachers and the immigrant youth of the community.

ADULT EDUCATION

- ❖ Interview respondents stressed the importance of learning English. However, there is a shortage of ESL classes. These classes should be available in various locations.
- ❖ Formal education levels among many Mexican immigrants are extremely low; many have fewer than six years of formal education. Hence it is often difficult for parents to assist their children academically.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve the educational status of children and adults in the community. Participants offered a wide range of education-related recommendations, including:

- ❖ improve the performance of children in local schools;
- ❖ expand after school tutoring and mentoring programs to improve academic performance and provide an alternative to gang involvement;
- ❖ expand the pool of bilingual and Latino teachers;
- ❖ provide opportunities for adult education.

B. THE STATUS OF CICERO EDUCATION, 2001

School district	Cicero School District 99	J.S. Morton East HS District 201
Address	5110 W. 24 th Street Cicero, IL 60804	2423 S. Austin Blvd. Cicero, IL 60804
Phone number	(708) 863-4856	(708) 222-5700
Grades served	Pre-kindergarten – 8 th	9 th – 12 th
Number of students	12,577	6612
Number of schools	15	3

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

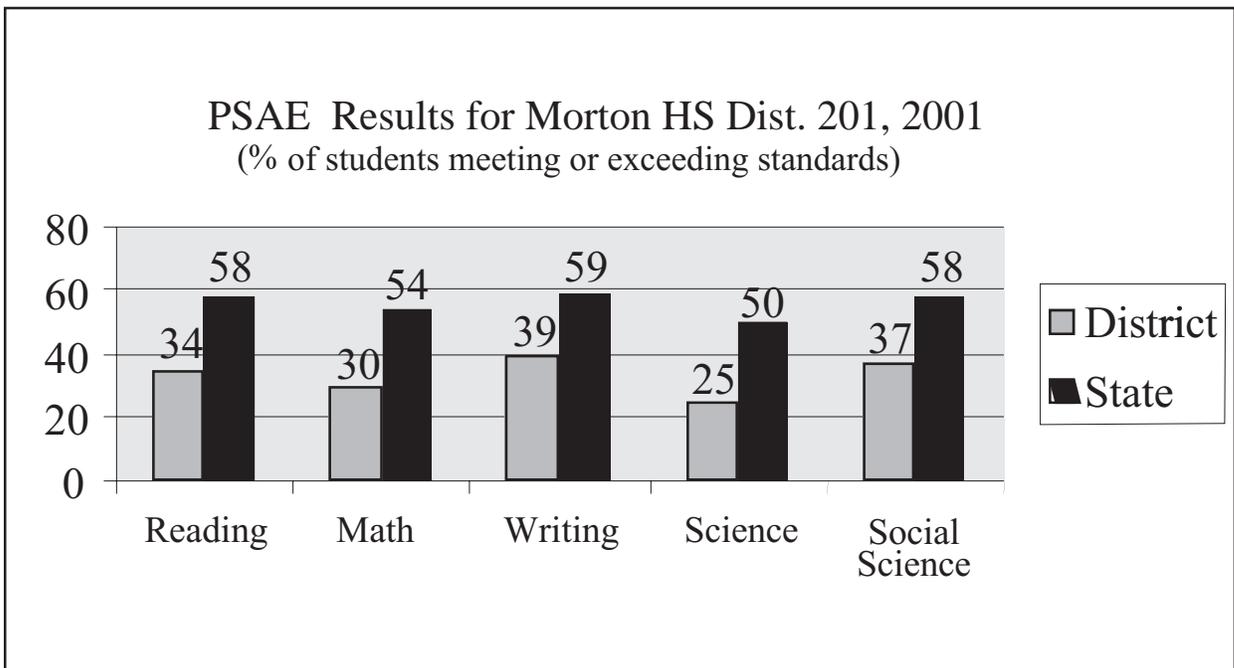
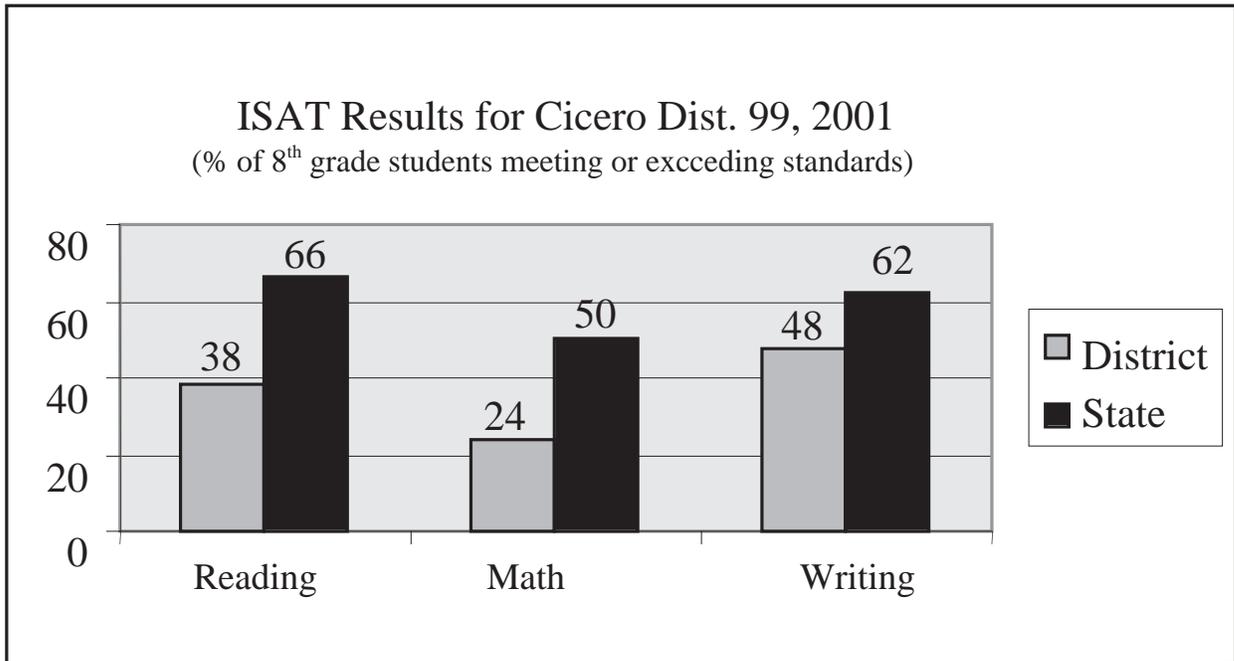
	Cicero District 99	Morton HS District 201	State of Illinois
Student enrollment	12,577	6,594	2,007,170
% White	6.3%	26.9%	60.1%
% Latino	92.3%	71.1%	15.4%
Limited English Proficient students	48.2%	12.0%	6.3%
Low-income students	69.9%	66.2%	36.9%
Mobility rate	32.6%	39.9%	17.2%
Chronic truancy rate	1.2%	4.7%	2.2%

TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS

	Cicero District 99	Morton HS District 201	State of Illinois
Total number of teachers	617	364	125,735
% White	77.1%	92.3%	84.7%
% Latino	22.7%	6.9%	3.7%
Student-to-teacher ratio	23.8	20.9	19.1 and 18.0, respectively
Average years of experience	10.8	12.3	14.5
Teachers with Bachelor's degrees	67.7%	39.1%	53.8%
Teachers with Master's and above	32.3%	60.6%	46.0%

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

	Morton East HS	Morton West HS	State of Illinois
Graduation rate	72.4%	78.0%	83.2
HS dropout rate	5.0%	6.6%	5.7%
ACT composite score	17.1	19.9	21.7



B. THE STATUS OF CICERO EDUCATION, UPDATED

School district	Cicero School District 99 (a)	J.S. Morton East HS (b)
Address	5110 W. 24 th Street Cicero, IL 60804	2423 S. Austin Blvd. Cicero, IL 60804
Phone number	(708) 863-4856	(708) 222-5700
Grades served	Pre-kindergarten - 8 th	9 th – 12 th
Number of students	12,972	3,932
Number of schools	15	1

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Cicero District 99 (a)	J.S. Morton East HS (b)	State of Illinois (c)
Student enrollment	12,972	3,932	2,044,539
% White	6.6%	5.8%	58.6%
% Latino	92.4%	93.2%	17.0%
Limited English Proficient students	48.7%	10.5%	6.3%
Low-income students	71.8%	69.2%	37.9%
Mobility rate	30.4%	14.3%	16.4%
Chronic truancy rate	1.2%	4.9%	1.9%

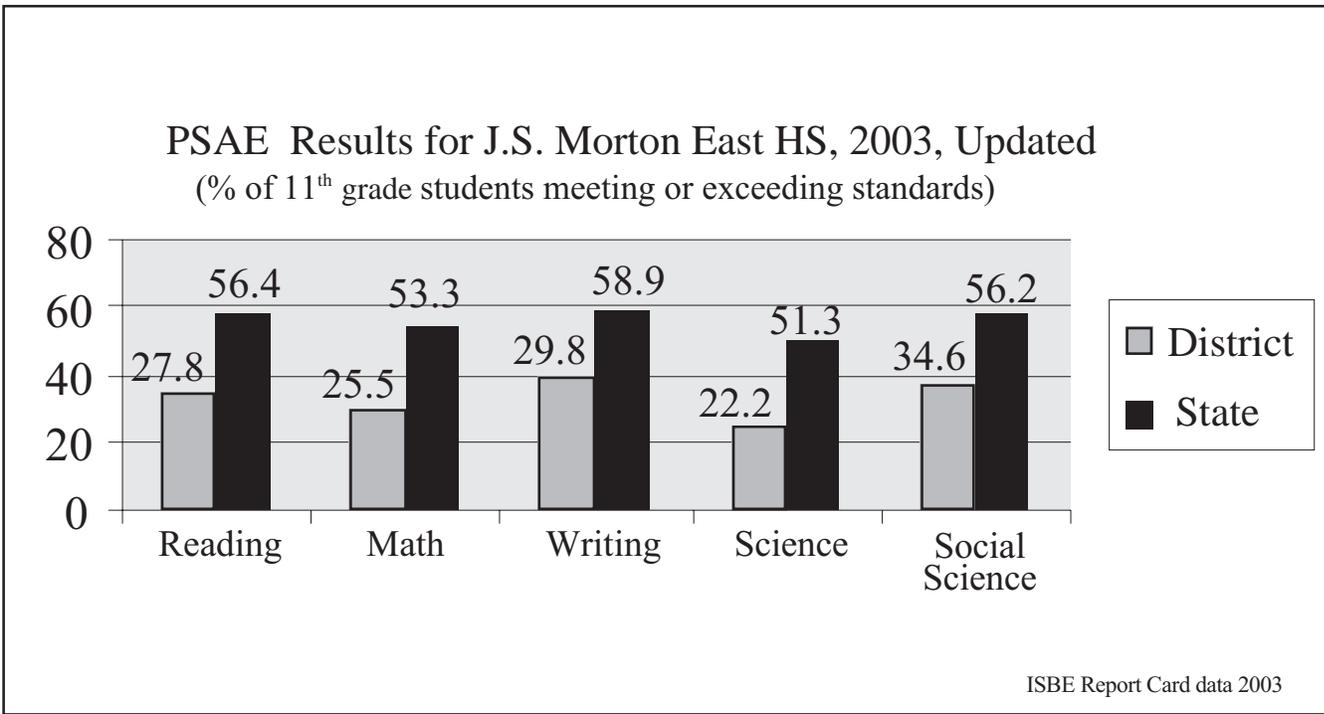
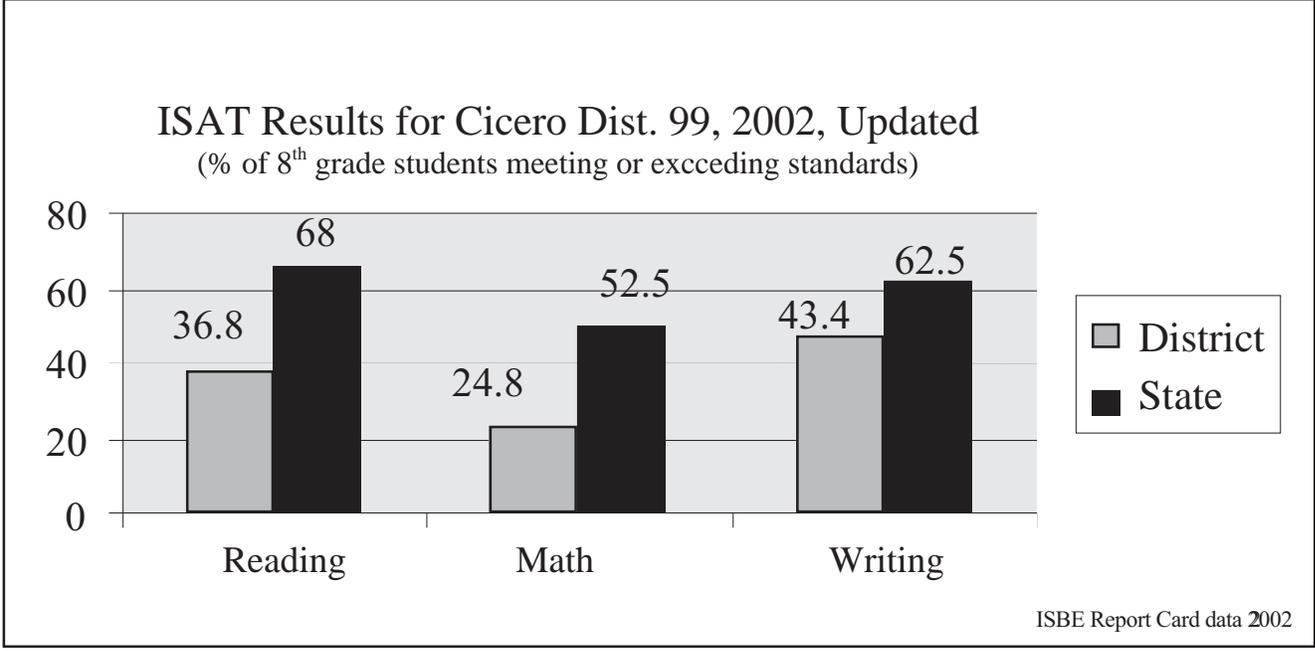
TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS

	Cicero District 99 (a)	J.S. Morton East HS (b)	State of Illinois (c)
Total number of teachers	619	385	129,068
% White	76.3%	89.8%	84.6%
% Latino	23.4%	8.7%	4.1%
Student-to-teacher ratio	24.5	21.6	19.1 and 18.2, respectively
Average years of experience	10.7	11.8	13.9
Teachers with Bachelor's degrees	66.6%	40.8%	53.9%
Teachers with Master's and above	33.4%	59.2%	46.0%

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

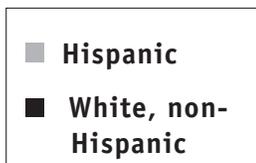
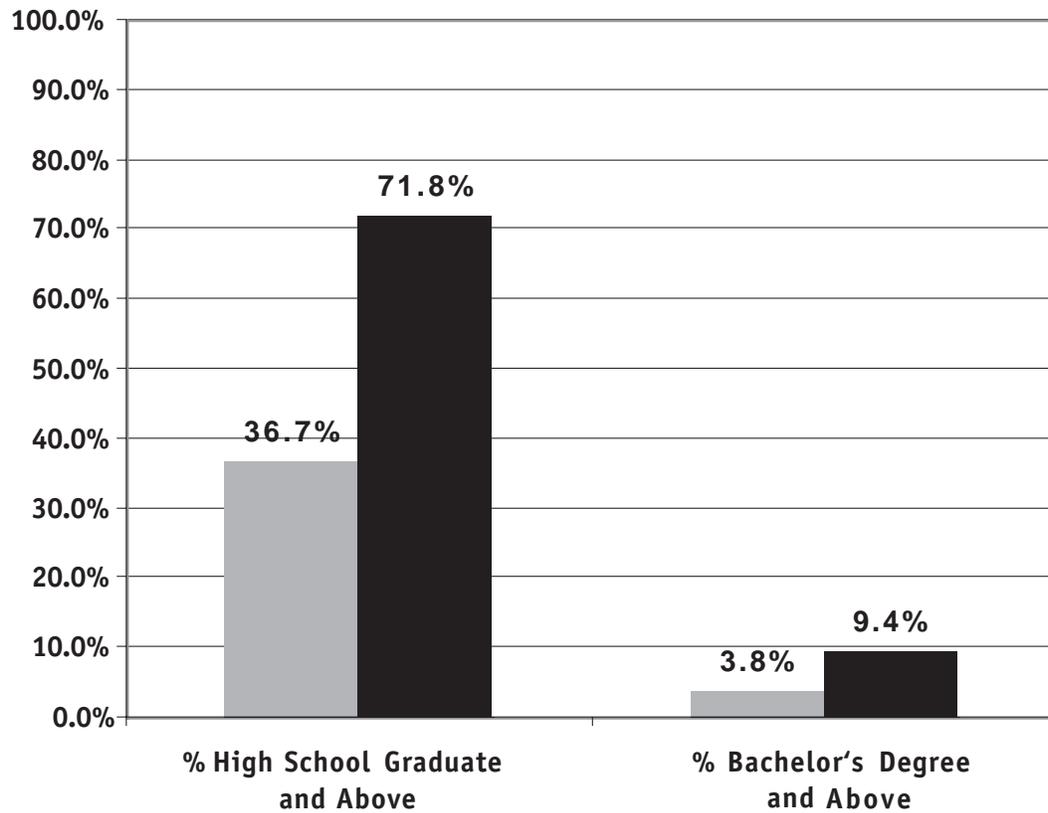
	Morton East HS (b)	State of Illinois (c)
Graduation rate	82.4%	86.0
ACT composite score	16.0	20.0

- (a) ISBE 2001–2002 High School Report Card data
- (b) ISBE 2002–2003 High School Report Card data
- (c) ISBE 2002–2003 High School Report Card data





C. CICERO EDUCATIONAL STATUS 2000



Source: US Census



D. CICERO EDUCATION FORUM AGENDA

**Cicero Educational Forum
Monday, November 18, 2002
Columbus West Elementary School
AGENDA**

Registration

Introductions and Purpose

Cris Pope—Interfaith Leadership Project
Delia Barajas—Neighborhood Center

Educational Overview – Opportunities and Status

Sylvia Puente—University of Notre Dame,
Institute for Latino Studies
Ismael Vargas—Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE)

Identify Educational Issues

José Rico, University of Illinois—Small Schools
Small Group Discussion

Establish Educational Priorities

José Rico, University of Illinois—Small Schools
Large Group Exercise

Determine Educational Vision and Action Steps

José Rico, University of Illinois—Small Schools
Small Group Discussion

Conclusion and Next Steps

Cris Pope—Interfaith Leadership Project
Delia Barajas—Neighborhood Center

E. CICERO EDUCATION FORUM FLYER

Cicero Educational Forum

The Cicero Educational Forum is an opportunity for parents, students, educators and community-based organizations to discuss and prioritize the educational needs of the Cicero community.

- WHEN?** Monday, November 18, 2002
5:30 to 9 pm
Free childcare will be provided on-site.
- WHERE?** Columbus West Elementary School
5425 W. 31st Street
Parking will be available at the back of the building.
- WHO?** Parents, students and representatives from the following community organizations and entities:
- Children's Center of Cicero and Berwyn
 - District 99
 - District 201
 - Interfaith Leadership Project
 - J. Sterling Morton East High School
 - Morton College
 - Neighborhood Center of Cicero
 - The University of Notre Dame Institute for Latino Studies
 - Parents United for Responsible Education
 - Progress Center for Independent Living
 - SER Jobs for Progress
 - Small Schools Project/UIC

For more information call: Interfaith Leadership Project 708/652-7711 or P.U.R.E. 312/461-1994



There will be a **free raffle**
PROMPTLY at 5:30 pm.
Arrive on time and enter to win
packets of school supplies for your student, class or school!





F. CICERO EDUCATION OVERVIEW

Cicero Educational Forum Monday, November 18, 2002 Columbus West Elementary School Overview

The Cicero Educational Forum is an opportunity for parents, students, educators, and community-based organizations to discuss and prioritize the educational needs of the Cicero community.

The objectives are to:

- Demonstrate community support for an improved education system in Cicero.
- Provide an opportunity for dialogue among parents, students, educators, and community-based organizations.
- Provide an overview of recent education research findings in Cicero.
- Identify educational issues, priorities, recommendations, and next steps for a community strategic planning process.

An *ad hoc* committee has met over the past few months to discuss the educational status of children in Cicero. We will use the information obtained from this forum to draft an educational plan for our children's future. We plan to present this plan and obtain feedback from the various stakeholders, including all participants who attended the forum and the local school board.

Representatives of the following organizations participated in planning this forum:

- Children's Center of Cicero and Berwyn
- District 99
- District 201
- Interfaith Leadership Project
- J.S. Morton East High School
- Morton College
- Neighborhood Center of Cicero
- The University of Notre Dame's Institute for Latino Studies
- Parents United for a Responsible Education
- Progress Center
- SER Jobs for Progress
- Small School Project/UIC



G. SECOND CICERO EDUCATION FORUM AGENDA

**Cicero Education Forum
Presentation of Findings
April 22, 6:30 – 9:00 pm**

Agenda

Objectives:

- Present the findings of the Cicero Education Forum.
- Obtain feedback on the strategies.
- Secure support of the majority of the members present.

Welcome and Overview

Education Background

Review Education Issues (Small Groups)

Small Group Presentation

Next Steps

Adjournment

H. SECOND CICERO EDUCATION FORUM FLYER

Continuing the Dialogue...

Cicero Educational Forum

presents:

Join us as we report on the educational issues that the parents, students, educators and community-based organizations identified on November 18, 2002.

- WHEN?** Tuesday, April 22, 2003
6:30 pm
Free childcare will be provided on-site.
- WHERE?** **Morton East High School**
2425 S. Austin Boulevard
- WHO?** Parents, students, educators and community organizations
- Cicero School District 99
 - J.S. Morton High School District 201
 - Interfaith Leadership Project
 - J.S. Morton East High School
 - Morton College
 - Neighborhood Center of Cicero
 - The University of Notre Dame Institute for Latino Studies
 - Parents United for Responsible Education
 - Progress Center for Independent Living
 - SER Jobs for Progress
 - Small Schools Project/UIC

For more information, or if are not able to attend the forum and would like a summary of the findings sent to your home or email, call: Interfaith Leadership Project 708/652-7711 or Morton East 708/222-5362