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Latino Educational Equity

A Web-Based Index and a Compendium
of Best Practices in Latino Education
in the United States



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Latino Educational Equity

Introducing a Web-Based Index
plus Three Essays on Best
Practices in Latino Education
in the United States

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Institute for Latino Studies



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In support of the mission of the Institute for Latino Studies and the Inter-University Program for Latino Research (IUPLR), the Research team provides policy-relevant information and analysis about Latino communities and issues affecting their well-being. The team both contributes to studies originating from the Institute's other programs and centers and from IUPLR member institutions and carries out its own independent projects.

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Introduction

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TIMOTHY READY

Timothy Ready, leader of the research team that compiled the index, is an anthropologist and director of the Lewis Walker Institute at Western Michigan University, where he focuses on economic justice and ethnic diversity in his administrative, research, and teaching efforts. During his extensive research experience, Ready has served on the Department of Anthropology faculty at the Catholic University of America and held the office of assistant vice president for Community and Minority Programs at the Association of American Medical Colleges. He has directed studies at the National Research Council of the National Academies in Washington DC and, most recently, served as director of research at the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame.



Educational Equity for Latinos

The future of the United States and the well-being of all Americans depend on the quality of education that our nation's children receive. If we are to achieve the American ideal of a society in which there is equal opportunity for all we must ensure that access to high-quality learning opportunities and resources is universal and equitable. Sadly, we know that we are still far from that ideal and that both educational opportunities and achievement differ widely depending on race, ethnicity, and the economic circumstances of students' families.

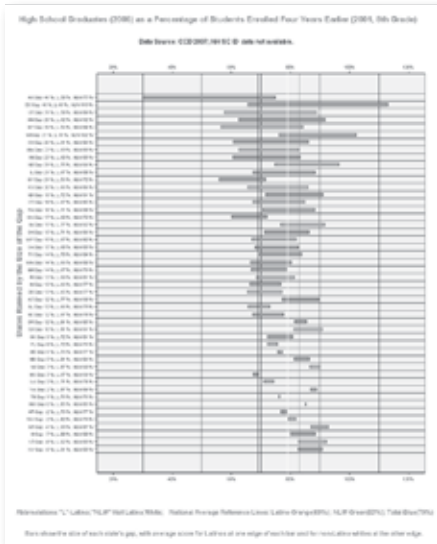
Latinos are the fastest growing segment of the US population but historically have been among the least well-served by schools. In 2010 the US labor force will be at least 13 percent Latino, and by mid-century Latino workers are projected to be almost a quarter of the total.¹ Will young Latinos in school today and tomorrow be ready to enter the world of work? Educational achievement level is currently one of the most significant predictors of a future worker's lifetime earnings and career potential, and Latinos as a group are not faring well in this regard. In 2000, 21 percent of Latinos aged 16 to 19 had not completed high school and were not enrolled in school, compared to 8 percent and 16 percent of their non-Latino white and black peers.²

Modest progress is being made in improving educational outcomes for students from all backgrounds, including Latinos, but major gaps in achievement remain, as measured by test scores and high school and college completion rates. Unless progress toward narrowing the gaps is greatly accelerated, the enormous potential contribution of Latinos to the nation's economic and cultural life will not be realized and the US workforce as a whole will suffer.



1 Mitra Toossi, "A Century of Change: The US Labor Force, 1950–2050," *Monthly Labor Review*, May 2002, 9.

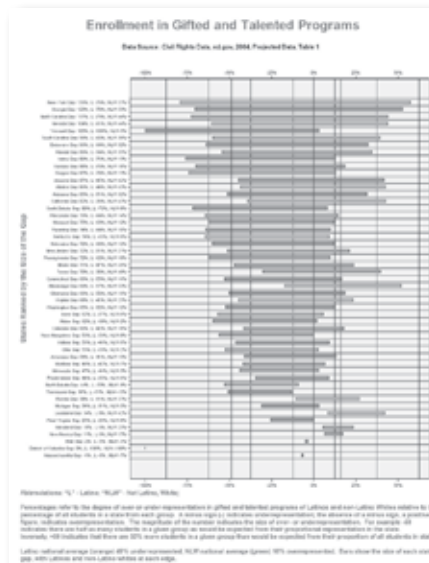
2 Richard Fry, *Hispanic Youth Dropping out of School: Measuring the Challenge* (Washington DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2003).



Achievement Indicators. One indicator depicts differences in the rate at which Latino and non-Latino white eighth graders go on to complete high school. The other eight achievement indicators depict data from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), a norm-referenced standardized test given periodically to a representative sample of students throughout the country. NAEP is the only nationwide exam given to a representative sample of students that measures students'

knowledge in different subjects. The eight NAEP indicators show differences in the average scores of Latino and non-Latino white students at two grade levels (fourth and eighth grades) and in four subject areas: Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Science.

Learning-Resource and Environment Indicators. Three of the learning-resource and environment indicators measure in-school factors and six measure out-of-school factors. The three in-school factors are participation rates in gifted and talented programs, Advanced Placement (AP) mathematics courses, and AP science courses. The first five out-of-school indicators depict differences between Latinos and non-Latino whites in child and family poverty rates, median family income, single-parent households, and single-parent households that are also poor. The final graph gives state-by-state percentages of Spanish-speaking children with limited English proficiency.





State View

The state view presents a summary description of the status of Latino and non-Latino white students for each state with regard to the various indicators of achievement and exposure to learning-relevant resources described above.



Indiana profile

I. Demographics

Latinos are the fastest growing segment of the US population and also are very young. The average age for Latinos in Indiana is 25.6, compared to 38.3 for non-Latino whites. As a result, Latino growth in the school-age population has been even more dramatic than in the population overall. 23.7% of all Latinos in Indiana are under the age of 18, compared to only 15.8% of non-Latino whites.

In 2006, there were 447,264 Latino school-age children in Indiana, an increase of 21,186 (42.5%) since 2000 and 45,448 (177.9%) since 1990. By comparison, the number of all other children (not Latino) in Indiana changed by -26,350 (-2.4%) since 2000 and by 41,043 (4.0%) since 1990. As a result, Latinos increased as a percentage of the school-age population in Indiana from 2.4% in 1990 to 4.3% in 2000 and to 6.2% in 2006.

Demographic Rankings for State

- At 70,999, Indiana ranks 21 among the 50 states and the District of Columbia in the number of Latino school-age children in 2006.
- At 6.2%, Indiana ranks 33 among the 50 states and the District of Columbia in the percentage of all school-age children who are Latino.
- With an increase of 21,186 Latino school-age children, Indiana ranks 16 in the numerical increase in Latino children since 2000.
- With an increase of 42.5% in Latino children since 2000, Indiana ranks 11 in the percentage increase in Latino children since 2000.
- With an increase of 45,448, Indiana ranks 20 in the numerical increase in Latino school age children since 1990.
- With an increase of 177.9% in Latino children since 2000, Indiana ranks 18 in the percentage increase in Latino children since 1990.

Best Practices

The three essays that follow were written to accompany the Latino Educational Equity Index. In addition to juxtaposing information about achievement and access to learning-relevant resources through the index, we hope that the information in these papers on Best Practices will help to guide efforts to improve learning outcomes, especially for Latino students.

Latino Educational Equity

A Compendium of Three Essays
on Best Practices in Latino Education
in the United States



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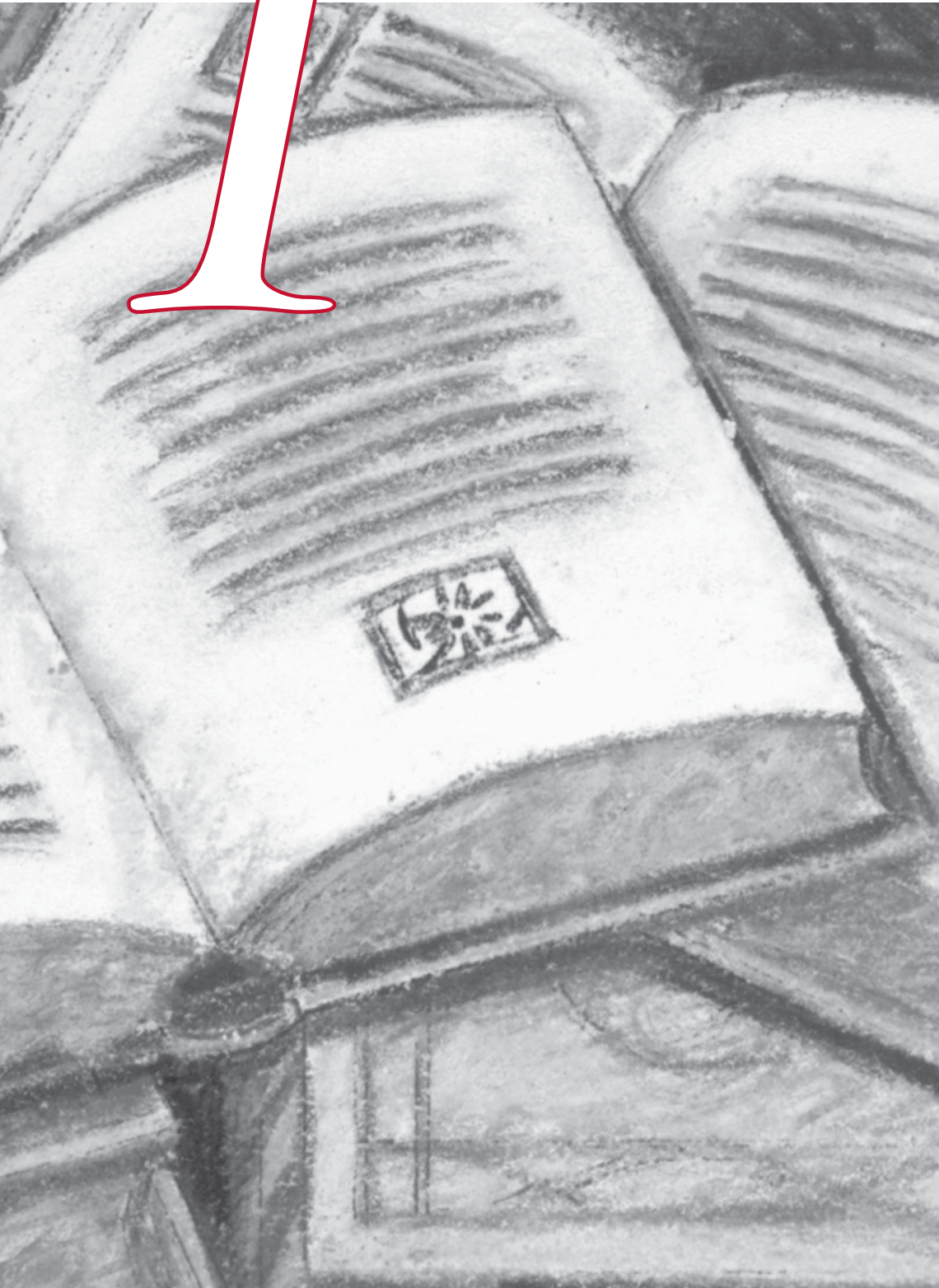
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Immigrants, Latinos, and Education in the United States

1

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Sonia Soltero is director of the Bilingual-Bicultural Education Program and associate professor of education at DePaul University, where she works in the Department of Leadership in Education, Language, and Human Services. Soltero's research covers the fields of bilingual and dual-language education, language planning, and language minority rights and policy, and she has taught courses on curriculum development, sociopolitical and historical perspectives in bilingual education, and emergent reading and language arts. Soltero's works in progress address the determinants of native language development in school among Chinese immigrant families in Chicago and the support and opposition to bilingual education, official English, and undocumented immigrants' rights in the United States.

ABSTRACT

Today's educational leaders face an unprecedented challenge to improve the quality of public education while simultaneously accommodating the educational needs of children who come from recently immigrated families, most of whom are Mexican and Latin American. Soltero examines the principal issues that pertain to the education of Latino students who come from non-English-speaking backgrounds. The paper offers brief synopses of the historical, demographic, political, and legal contexts of language-minority education in the United States, tracing factors influencing positive and negative conceptions of bilingual education. It outlines the debates surrounding additive and subtractive methods of bilingual education, analyzing their theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings. There is no federal mandate for bilingual education, but civil rights laws do require educational programs that offer equal opportunities for English-Language Learners (ELLs). Many ELLs have long been marginalized and too often segregated into programs that suffer from inadequate attention. The extent to which schools affirm and promote ELLs' language and cultural backgrounds produces either empowering or disabling educational frameworks. The demographic changes in the United States have generated increasing challenges for educators and policy-makers on how best to address ELLs' educational experiences and outcomes. Calling for a critical and culturally responsive education system, Soltero's essay concludes with a section that presents both broad and specific recommendations at the federal and state government, boards of education, school district, school, and classroom levels for improving these experiences and outcomes.

Immigrants, Latinos, and Education in the United States



Introduction

This paper examines the principal issues that pertain to the education of Latino students who come from non-English-speaking backgrounds. The paper offers brief synopses of the historical, demographic, political, and legal contexts of language-minority education in the United States, analyzes its theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings, and discusses implications for the advancement of linguistic-minority student achievement.

The demographic changes in the United States have generated increasing challenges for educators and policy-makers on how best to address the educational needs of children who come from recently immigrated families, most of whom are Mexican and Latin American. Federal and state laws require that all children residing in the United States have access to quality education, including children who are not proficient in the English language and who may or may not be legal residents. However, providing education services to recently immigrated children from developing countries has been a contentious political and educational issue for some time.

In the United States the education of non-English-speaking children has been closely tied to the sociopolitical context of anti-immigration movements, xenophobic sentiments, and assimilationist ideologies. These nativist principles favor the interests of the natives over those of foreigners, often leading to hostility toward immigrants (Fry 2007). Part of the nativist approach is for the natives to control foreign access to valued resources such as employment, the *lingua franca* (English), citizenship, and education.

In response to the continued and increasing influx of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, anti-immigrant sentiment has surged in many parts of the United States. Two popular stances govern the ideology of anti-immigration: abolish bilingual education and make English the official language of the United States. In response, many Latino communities create stronger social bases by resisting language and cultural assimilation in favor of acculturation models of integration. This acculturation model results in bicultural groups that can function in two spheres by maintaining their native language and culture and at the same time adopting the language and culture of the host country. However, maintaining a non-English language in the United States is especially difficult due to societal pressures to assimilate, a proclivity for monolingualism, legal and funding restrictions on bilingual education, and a collective desire to increase the status of English as the official language of the land.



Education for non-English-speaking children in the United States is provided in one of two mediums: bilingual or English-only instruction. English-only instruction offers the academic curriculum through immersion in English with no native language support, whereas bilingual instruction presents the academic curriculum in students' mother tongue while they are learning English. On the surface, bilingual education appears to be merely a choice of language of instruction, but a closer look reveals that it is heavily politicized and contentious. The controversial nature of bilingual education is fed by lack of public support, misconceptions about the language acquisition process, a shortage of qualified teachers, and lack of appropriate instructional materials and assessment measures, all factors that have contributed to negative attitudes toward bilingual education not only on the part of the mainstream population but also on the part of immigrant communities.

Several studies have examined the public's opinion of bilingual education in the United States (Huddy and Sears 1990; Shin and Gribbons 1996). Shin and Kim (1996) found that most Korean immigrant parents support the general principles of bilingual education, but when asked specifically if the use of Korean in the classroom allowed their children to be at the same level as their peers academically while they developed English, only 32 percent of the parents agreed. The findings point to a lack of understanding among immigrant parents about the workings of bilingual education.

Conflicting views of bilingual education are common among immigrant groups residing in the United States. Opposition to bilingual education is most pronounced when an extreme view (only native-language instruction) of bilingual education is presented, but when subjects are asked about using both languages or are asked about bilingual education in general, responses are more positive (Krashen 1996). Shin and Gribbons (1996) found that Latino parents tend to support the general principles of bilingual education. Similarly, De la Garza et al. (1992) found strong support for bilingual education among Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban parents. The majority of Latino parents felt that reading, writing, and basic subjects should be taught in both English and Spanish.

Several conditional characteristics shape attitudes and perceptions toward bilingual education. Elements that contribute to negative attitudes include:

- immigrants' desire to succeed in an English-dominant society that requires English proficiency to access better educational and employment opportunities;
- an emphasis on assimilating into the mainstream society;
- fear of discrimination and prejudicial treatment due to lack of English proficiency;
- belief that bilingualism is a liability;
- supposition that bilingual education retards English-language development and stigmatizes children who participate in bilingual programs; and
- assumptions that bilingual education programs are of inferior quality in comparison to English-only education programs.

Factors that contribute to favorable attitudes toward bilingual education include:

- immigrants' desire to maintain and pass on the native language and culture to the second and third generations;
- belief that bilingualism is an asset;
- recognition that a bilingual person has better employment opportunities;

- aspirations to eventually return to the native country;
- circular migration and close ties to the native country; and
- fear of discrimination and prejudicial treatment due to lack of language proficiency in the native country.

Bilingual education in the United States has typically been implemented as a corrective and subtractive program that aims to assimilate linguistic minorities into the mainstream culture and produce monolingual English speakers. Although bilingual education models originated as enrichment programs intended to develop fluency in two languages and promote cultural pluralism, the focus has shifted to remedial efforts designed to help *disadvantaged* children overcome their *handicap* of limited English proficiency. The most detrimental elements of this type of subtractive education are both the loss of the home language and the resulting alienation from the home culture.



Cummins's (2000) notion of *coercive vs. collaborative relations of power*, in which society's micro- and macro-structures are configured by dominant-subordinated group relationships, helps to explain the influences on how educators define their roles, expectations, and assumptions in the education of Latino children. For English-language learners (ELLs), *coercive* relations of power are manifested in assimilationist practices that promote the rejection of the home culture and language as a necessary condition to succeed in the mainstream society. Conversely, *collaborative* relations of power value and recognize the sources of knowledge that minority students possess even though they are outside the dominant discourse of schools. For ELLs, the extent to which schools affirm and promote their language and cultural backgrounds produces either empowering or disabling educational frameworks.

Demographic Context

The number of students who are not proficient in English in the United States has surpassed the overall growth in school enrollments and created additional challenges for schools to meet the demands for adequate bilingual programs and English as a second language (ESL) services. According to the 2000 Census, the total K–12 enrollment in the United States grew 12 percent in a decade (from 45,443,389 in 1993 to 49,619,090 in 2003). Of the 53.2 million children currently enrolled in K–12 classrooms, 3.8 million children are not proficient in English. In contrast, ELLs' enrollment increased by 65 percent from 3,037,922 students to 5,013,539 between 1993 and 2003. Almost 70 percent of ELLs live in California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas. According to Kominski,



Jamieson, and Martinez (2001), who examine seven at-risk conditions for school-age populations, ELLs are more likely to live in families with incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty threshold and come from new immigrant backgrounds. Children who do not speak English well, or have family incomes less than \$10,000, or have parents who have recently immigrated, are at risk for poor life outcomes. Kominski, Jamieson, and Martínez identify the seven risk factors as:

at least one disability; retained in grade at least once; speaks English less than 'very well'; does not live with both parents; either parent emigrated in past 5 years; family income below \$10,000; and neither parent/guardian employed. Generally, these conditions are thought to be characteristics of the individual, or situations of the context they are a part of, that are believed to create higher likelihoods of undesirable life outcomes (e.g., completing high school, avoiding premarital births), or to impact overall quality of life. (Kominski, Jamieson, and Martinez 2001)

The essential risk factors facing many Latino children in the United States (poverty, lack of English proficiency, and lack of access to social support systems) are well researched and broadly reported (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova 2008). Latino children face many challenges related to family income and structure, parental work patterns, educational attainment, English proficiency, and health insurance coverage. Students of Mexican descent have the largest high school dropout rate in the United States and have experienced an alarming rate of school failure. According to the final report of the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (2003), 61 percent of recently immigrated Mexican students drop out of high school. According to census data, Latino immigrants' graduation rates are well below those of native-born groups such as African Americans and whites. Only 34 percent of Mexican immigrants have a high school diploma, compared to 90 percent for whites and 74 percent for African Americans (National Center for Education Statistics 2002).

Although measures to address the educational needs of Latino students have been adopted, the educational attainment of this group continues to be a source of concern. In 2005, among Latinos aged 25, 7.9 percent had less than five years of elementary school; 58.5 percent had high school completion or higher, and 12 percent had a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 0.5 percent, 90 percent, and 30.5 percent in respective categories for the white non-Hispanic population (National Center for Education Statistics 2007).

Because students who are considered 'at risk' commonly underperform academically, they require access to qualified educators and quality language education services to address their linguistic and academic needs. In the United States most teachers and administrators lack basic knowledge about factors that impact the education of ELLs, such as understanding bilingual education and second-language acquisition as well as how poverty and immigration impact educational attainment. To compound this lack of knowledge, Latino teachers and administrators are underrepresented in schools nationwide. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2006a), only 6 percent of all teachers in the United States are Latino (compared to 83 percent who are white) and only 5 percent of school principals are Latino (compared to 82 percent who are white). The lack of relevant knowledge among administrators and teachers and

the under-representation of Latino teachers and principals affect schools, school districts, and language-minority populations:

America's ethnic profile is rapidly changing. In 2000, 1 of every 3 children in the United States is from a racial or ethnic minority group, 1 in 7 speaks a language other than English, and 1 in 15 was foreign born... Minority children comprise an increasing percentage of public school students... The limited English proficient population is the fastest growing in our nation. (United States Code Service; Title 20, Education, 2007)

Although the urgency to address the academic needs of PreK–12 students from non-English-speaking backgrounds is clear, institutions of higher education that prepare educators for the realities of a diverse student population have not responded with adequate teacher preparation programs. Compounding the difficult practical issues that schools face with respect to teaching ELLs, the current mechanisms for preparing teachers and administrators have failed to produce enough educators who possess the knowledge and skills required to address more effectively the needs of ELLs and their families. Existing education leadership programs fall short in preparing school administrators to deal with the complexities of an increasingly diverse school population (Darling-Hammond et al. 1995). A nationwide survey of 417 higher education institutions reported the following:

Only a small number of higher education institutions surveyed offer a teacher preparation program in bilingual education or TESOL [Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages]. Few preparation programs require that mainstream teacher candidates are prepared to teach English language learners. The study found fewer than 1/6th of the higher education institutions studied require preparation of mainstream elementary and secondary teachers regarding the education of limited English proficient students... The population of English language learners in our public schools continues to rise exponentially, such that half of all teachers may expect to teach an English language learner during their career. [So] the dearth of programs that exist to prepare teachers to work with this population of students is staggering. (Menken and Antuñez 2001)

Only the states of Florida and New York require that all university students who are earning teacher certification complete courses related to the education of students who are not yet proficient in the English language. Such courses cover ESL instructional methods, second-language acquisition theories, legal requirements for ELL education, and socio-cultural aspects of educating language-minority students.

In addition to the shortage of qualified teachers and administrators and the lack of appropriate teacher education coursework and programs in institutions of higher education, other institutional and societal at-risk factors contribute to the underachievement of minority-language students: underfunded schools and programs; overcrowded schools with predominantly minority students; overrepresentation of novice teachers in high-risk and 'combat zone' schools; lack of extracurricular activities for students; segregated and unsafe schools; inadequacy of services such as health and counseling; and deteriorating school buildings.

The Chicago metropolitan area, which includes six counties, is reflective of the challenges faced by school systems across the United States. According to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs report *A Shared Future: The Economic*



Engagement of Greater Chicago and its Mexican Community (2006), of the 1.6 million Latinos in the Chicago metropolitan area, about 1.3 million, or 80 percent, are Mexican or of Mexican origin, followed by 149,000 Puerto Ricans and 17,000 Cubans. According to Paral (2006), “the Latino population of metropolitan Chicago has become arguably less ‘Latino’ and increasingly more ‘Mexican’” (105). In 2004 Mexicans accounted for 41 percent of all immigrants in the city of Chicago and 16 percent of the surrounding area. Mexicans constitute the largest ethnic group in the Chicago metropolitan area, and their population is expected to double by 2030. According to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs report, the role of the Mexican community in the Chicago and Illinois economy is critical: “Mexicans constitute 80 percent of the Chicago Latino community... Mexico is Illinois’ second largest trading partner... Mexicans’ bilingual and bicultural capabilities represent opportunities for business and cultural exchanges with the \$2.4 trillion market of the world’s Spanish-speaking countries” (11).

The Chicago metropolitan area has one of the largest and fastest-growing populations of students of Mexican origin. Latino children under 18, who are mostly born in the United States, make up 35 percent of the total Latino population in the Chicago metropolitan area. Between 1990 and 2004 every county in the Chicago metropolitan area except Cook County experienced more than a 150 percent increase in the population of Mexican descent. Chicago Public Schools (the third largest public school system in the United States after New York City and Los Angeles) educate a total of 430,000 students; 38 percent of these students come from Latino backgrounds, mostly from Mexican families.

Bilingual Education

Broadly defined, bilingual education includes any educational program that uses two languages for instruction. Unlike foreign-language education, where students study the target language and culture as a subject, bilingual education usually entails the study of literacy and/or content areas (math, science, and social studies) through two languages, the majority language (English) and a minority language (such as Spanish). In the United States bilingual education programs may be offered in early childhood, elementary, or high school settings and sometimes in colleges and universities. The feasibility of offering bilingual education programs for second-language learners depends on several factors: sufficient numbers of students from the same language group; availability of certified bilingual teachers; and state and local policies.

Bilingual education is a multidimensional concept used to refer to numerous types of program designs that have divergent linguistic goals (bilingualism or monolingualism), differences in the length of implementation (short-term or long-term), variations in the amount of use of each language, and distinctions in programmatic composition (Crawford 2004). According to the *Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education* (Baker and Jones 1998) “Bilingual education is a simple label for a complex phenomenon.” Mackey (1978) categorized 90 variations of bilingual education around the world. Nevertheless, all programs in which ELLs participate fall under two basic paradigms:

1) *Additive programs*. The goal is to develop full bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism by adding the second language and maintaining and developing the first language. Additive program models include *maintenance*, *developmental*

bilingualism, heritage language, and dual language or two-way immersion.

2) *Subtractive programs.*

The goal is to become monolingual in the majority language by abandoning the native language. Subtractive models include *transitional bilingual education* and *newcomer programs*. Other program models for ELLs that do not fall under the category of bilingual education because they generally only use English as the medium of instruction are *structured English immersion* and *English as a second language (ESL)*.



Transitional bilingual education temporarily supports students' academic development by providing native-language instruction as they acquire English through ESL for a period ranging from one to eight years. The principal objective is to facilitate students' academic progress through the language they understand while they acquire proficiency in the second language to function academically in English. Transitional bilingual education consists of two program types: 1) *Early-exit* is the model most widely implemented in the United States, where ELLs are exited into the general English education program after one to four years, once they have achieved proficiency in English. 2) In *late-exit* students continue to receive instruction in the native language for a few more years after having achieved proficiency in English. The primary goal in late-exit is to continue to develop students' literacy and oral language skills in the native language as well as in English for a longer period of time.

Maintenance bilingual education is sometimes known as *developmental* or *enrichment* education. In this model ELLs maintain and develop their native languages after they have acquired English, usually through eighth grade or beyond. The primary aim of maintenance bilingual education is for students to develop bilingual and biliterate proficiencies and to achieve academically at grade level. Maintenance bilingual programs are culturally responsive because they value and build on students' home cultural and linguistic knowledge (Cummins 2000).

Heritage language programs are designed for students who come from homes where a language other than English is used, including people of indigenous ancestry, colonized groups, new immigrants and refugees, and children and grandchildren of immigrants. These programs aim either to maintain the language and culture of the home or to revitalize the native language and culture that is no longer used fluently by the younger generation of its speakers.

Newcomer centers programs provide academic, linguistic, and social support to recently immigrated students typically in middle or high school settings and are designed to address the needs of recent arrivals who have interrupted schooling or no schooling (Castro Feinberg 2002). Newcomer centers were



created to address the special needs of ELLs that bilingual or ESL programs are not adequately equipped to manage because these students are not proficient in English and they are not academically prepared to deal with grade-level work. A key feature of most newcomer centers is the provision of an emotionally safe learning environment that supports rapid second-language learning, adaptation to the host culture, and development of a positive self-image (Díaz-Rico and Weed 2002).

Dual-language education, also known as *two-way bilingual immersion*, is the only bilingual program that integrates English native speakers with speakers of another language in the common pursuit of continuing to develop their native language and culture while acquiring a second language and culture (Soltero 2004). The major goals of this model are to develop full biliteracy and bilingualism, high academic achievement, and multicultural competencies. Dual-language education in the United States was adapted from the Canadian educational program that began in 1965 in Montreal, where English-speaking children initially received all curriculum instruction in French and gradually added English (Lambert and Tucker 1972).

Researchers and educators differ in their conceptions and definitions of bilingual education. Nevertheless, the descriptions of the models presented above provide general characteristics of the types of educational programs offered to ELLs in the United States. Unfortunately, not all ELLs have the benefit of participating in specialized instruction programs such as ESL and bilingual education. Many ELLs throughout the United States end up in submersion or 'sink or swim' contexts, where ELLs are simply placed in mainstream classrooms with no specialized support.

Second-Language Theories and Program Models

One of many incorrect assertions used against bilingual education is the notion that second-language learners can acquire English in less than one year. Decades of research both in the United States and abroad have demonstrated that the acquisition of *academic language* for second-language learners takes between five and seven years in comparison to the length of time to learn *conversational language*, which can take from one to two years (Cummins 2000).

In the United States English is a fundamental tool to achieve in school and to have the potential to become a successful member of society. Bartolomé (1994) points to the contradictory disparities in the status of languages in the United States: "[W]hile we discourage the maintenance of linguistic minority students' native language throughout their education, we require English-speaking students to study a foreign language as a prerequisite for college..." (207). In other words, monolinguals should become bilinguals and bilinguals should become monolingual.

The loss of the home language and culture is often seen as necessary for the appropriate development of English. Hence, linguistic minorities not only experience loss of personal identity and emotional bonds with their communities but also rejection from the mainstream society. Ada (1995) asserts that:

Despite its widespread acceptance, the subtractive model of bilingualism, in which mastery of the second language is achieved at the expense of proficiency in the first, need not be the framework on which bilingual education rests. Additive bilingualism, in which a second language is acquired while

maintaining and continuing to develop the first, is a healthy and viable alternative to subtractive bilingualism. (237)

Research has shown that cognitive skills are best acquired through the primary language and then transferred to the second language. The use of the home language helps children develop critical thinking abilities and cognitive skills. This cognitive structuring is not only shaped by linguistic knowledge but also by cultural knowledge and the context in which that knowledge is obtained (Trueba 1991).

Cummins (2000) proposes three principles relevant to bilingual development and language teaching. First, the *additive bilingual enrichment principle* contends that “the development of additive bilingual and biliteracy skills entails no negative consequences for children’s academic, linguistic or intellectual development...the evidence points in the direction of subtle metalinguistic and intellectual benefits for bilingual children” (21). Numerous studies have reported findings that indicate that bilingual children demonstrate a greater awareness of linguistic meanings and seem to be more flexible in their thinking than monolingual children. Bilingual children must decipher much more linguistic input through the effort of gaining command of two languages than monolingual children who are exposed to only one language system.

Second, the *interdependence principle* is based upon the premise that there is an underlying cognitive and academic proficiency common across all languages regardless of their distinct surface features. Cummins maintains that first- and second-language academic skills are interdependent and that there is no relationship between the amount of instructional time spent in the second language and academic achievement. According to Cummins, the *common underlying proficiency* makes possible the transfer of literacy-related skills between languages.

Third, the *interactive pedagogy principle* subscribes to Krashen’s (1996) assertion that language is acquired more easily when it is comprehensible. The key factor in Krashen’s theoretical model is *comprehensible input*: messages in the second language that make sense when modified and facilitated by visual aids and context. He contends that we acquire grammatical structures in their natural order when sufficient amounts of high-quality input are present. Rules are then generalized from verbal stimuli according to innate principles of grammar. The principle of comprehensible input is based on the idea that the main function of language use is meaningful communication. The importance of meaningful language use at all stages in the acquisition of second-language skills has become recognized as a critical and determining factor for the successful development of a second language and the maintenance of the first language.

Bilingual Education in the United States: History, Legislation, and Policy

Following the United States Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* of 1954 abolishing school segregation, as well as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin, the federal government passed the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. This legislation provided federal funding to encourage local school districts to implement native-language instruction and other types of support services for students not yet proficient in English (Crawford 2004).



The Bilingual Education Act was enacted as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and remained in force until 2002, when it was replaced by the English Language Acquisition Act under the new federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Title VII became Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which no longer gave funding priority for native-language instruction and instead turned the choice of how to spend federal funds for ELLs to the discretion of each state. The NCLB Act requires that schools address the educational needs of students who are not yet proficient in English regardless of whether they are documented or not. The law defines limited-English-proficient students as: “ages 3 to 21, enrolled in elementary or secondary education, often born outside the United States or speaking a language other than English in their homes, and not having sufficient mastery of English to meet state standards and excel in an English-language classroom.”

In the 1974 landmark case *Lau v. Nichols*, the United States Supreme Court ruled that “there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” (Baker 2006). The court’s decision in the *Lau v. Nichols* case required schools to take “affirmative steps” to overcome language barriers impeding children’s access to the curriculum. Congress immediately endorsed this principle in the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974. Neither the Bilingual Education Act nor the *Lau* decision requires any particular method for teaching students who are not yet proficient in English. That is, there is no federal mandate for bilingual education (although a few states mandate it under certain circumstances). What civil rights laws do require are educational programs that offer equal opportunities for ELLs.

The federal law stipulates that schools are responsible for ensuring that all students, including ELLs, have equal access to a quality education that enables them to progress academically while learning English. Furthermore, in its 1974 decision in *Lau v. Nichols*, the United States Supreme Court upheld the 1970 memo issued by the Office of Civil Rights. The basis for the case was the claim that students could not understand the language in which they were being taught; therefore, they were not being provided with an equal education. The case reaffirmed that all students in the United States, regardless of native language, have the right to receive a quality education. It also clarified that equality of opportunity does not necessarily mean the same education for every student but rather the same opportunity to receive an education. An equal education is only possible if students can understand the language of instruction.

Administrative, judicial, and legislative policies tend to favor bilingual programs that are remedial, compensatory, and transitional in nature (those that try to ‘fix’ children’s deficiencies of not knowing English), rather than supporting bilingual programs that are additive and enrichment-oriented (those that add English and maintain the native language). Interwoven in the debate on how to best meet the academic and linguistic needs of ELLs in schools have been basic ideologies and beliefs about linguistic diversity, immigration, and immigrant rights. Ruiz (1994) delineates three broad orientations on language diversity that have driven policy and politics in the United States:

- *Language as a Problem.* Subscribes to the notion that language diversity results in social conflict, divisiveness, and ethnic strife.

- *Language as a Right*. Views language as a basic human right challenging language prejudice and discrimination.
- *Language as a Resource*. Considers the diverse linguistic capital of a society as a cultural, social, personal, and national resource, both in terms of its economic potential and also of fostering social unity.

Since the early 1980s a resurgence of the “language as a problem” orientation has paved the way for the Official English movement that aims to legislate English as the official language of the United States. As a result of this movement two opposing organizations emerged: US English—driving the push to make English the official language of the United States, a move that would restrict government-supported services in non-English languages, including bilingual education; and English Plus—countering the necessity to make English the official language and promoting linguistic pluralism. To date, bills introduced to congress to make English the official language of the United States have failed. Nonetheless, 28 states have passed Official English laws.

Language restrictionism policies are closely tied to language-minority education. The passage in 1998 of California’s Proposition 227, *English Language Education for Children in Public Schools Initiative*, made it law to disband bilingual education and institute compulsory one-year English-immersion programs for ELLs. Similarly, Arizona passed Proposition 223 in 2000, which also virtually eliminated bilingual education for linguistically diverse students, and voters in Massachusetts approved a referendum to discontinue bilingual education in 2002.

Claims about the ineffectiveness of bilingual education coupled with the media’s predisposition against it have allowed for the dissemination of inaccuracies and misinformation (Crawford 2001). The inadequate implementation of many bilingual programs has further cultivated the notion that bilingual education is a failure. The causes of low performance for most bilingual education programs are closely correlated to the lack of adequate funds, scarcity of qualified educators, large class size, and the absence of proven teaching methodology (Dicker 2000). Solidly designed bilingual programs that address these fundamental factors have proven to be highly effective for linguistically diverse students. Numerous studies (August and Hakuta 1997; Ramírez 1992; Thomas and Collier 1997, 2002) have demonstrated that students who participate in well-implemented programs that use the native language for instruction for more than three years show better academic performance and mastery in English and have lower drop-out rates.

Implications and Recommendations

For many years the predominant and accepted means of explaining the educational failure of linguistic minorities has been in the context of *deficit theories*, based on the notions of *cultural deprivation* and *genetic inferiority*. Deficit theories perpetuate the notion that some minority students experience school failure due to “limited educability, poor motivation, and inadequate familial socialization for academic competence” (San Miguel and Valencia 1998, 368). These perspectives of limitations subscribe to the popular ‘blame the victim’ approach while dismissing any consideration of how schools are structured to prevent students from learning.

Research studies reveal the kinds of critical thinking and inference-making that culturally and linguistically diverse students exercise and express given the



opportunity and motivation. They also show how the motivations that deficit theories claim to be lacking in minority students need only be activated by a transformative and culturally responsive pedagogy that incorporates the topics that are most relevant to students' lives. Freire (2000) argues that students will only acquire real ownership of their learning when they are invited to ask their own questions on subjects that are important to them. The educational outcomes of ELLs are meaningful and successful only when the assumptions behind deficit theories are challenged and replaced (Nieto 2000). Bilingual education in its additive and culturally responsive form provides a vehicle for linguistically diverse students to reach their potential and in turn exposes and discredits the deficit theory.

Ruiz (1997) contends that native-language instruction goes beyond the development of language proficiency and cognitive growth. He argues that sociopolitical and sociolinguistic ramifications extending from bilingual education provide the means to break from established social inequity constructs. That is, the use of the native language and culture in the curriculum catapults minority students from their subjugated positions by sharing the power with the dominant group. Macedo (1997) concurs in that

educators must demystify the standard dominant language and the old assumption about its inherent superiority. Educators must develop liberatory and critical bilingual programs informed by a radical pedagogy so that the minority language will cease to provide its speakers with the experience of subordination... (276)

However, Ruiz cautions that often the *inclusion* of the *language* of a group has coincided with the *exclusion* of its *voice*, which is the central ingredient of critical pedagogy; without its consideration, there is no radical reform in curriculum.

Improving the academic outcomes of language-minority children in the United States requires a broad reconfiguration of the many factors that impact the quality of education for this population. The National Association of State Boards of Education's recently published report (2007) on the education of language learners recognizes the urgency to address the "unprecedented challenge for today's education leaders to simultaneously improve the quality of public education while accommodating the largest number of ELLs the nation has ever seen" and speaks to the "widespread recognition that ELLs have long been marginalized and too often segregated into programs that suffer from inadequate attention" (8). The large body of research on language-minority education points to some key micro- and macro-level elements and approaches that show promise in improving academic outcomes for ELLs. Moving toward implementation of these recommendations will facilitate the restructuring of ELL policy and instruction and align practice to current research and theory in the field. The following section presents some broad as well as specific recommendations for improving the educational experiences and outcomes of ELLs.

Considerations for the Broader Context

- Teacher preparation and educational administration licensure programs in higher education must include coursework for all teachers and administrators that address the special needs of ELLs.
- Federal and state government education agencies should provide financial support and incentives to increase the pool of qualified bilingual and



ESL-endorsed/certified teachers and administrators.

- State Boards of Education must recognize the urgent national imperative to address language education policies and enact research-based mandates that support the educational attainment of ELLs.
- State Boards of Education should include early childhood education mandates for providing language support services in the preschool setting.

- State Boards of Education and school districts should include alternatives to high-stakes testing for ELLs and design appropriate evaluation methods for second-language learners.
- School districts should improve placement and reclassification tests for ELLs to more adequately monitor their progress and placement in ESL, bilingual, or general English programs.
- School districts should monitor and guide teachers' use of proven successful instructional approaches and techniques for ELLs.

Considerations for the School Context

- Implement additive bilingual programs that maintain and develop both the native language and English and when possible institute dual-language programs to benefit both ELLs and native English speakers.
- Implement high-quality transactional-oriented programs for ELLs rather than remedial transmission-oriented programs.
- Create safe and supportive school environments to promote higher levels of academic engagement that value the linguistic and cultural capital of all their students.
- Avoid segregating ELLs and instead integrate them in mainstream school activities and course offerings with specialized support.
- Hire experienced and qualified teachers who hold positive attitudes toward language-minority students.
- Hire administrators who enforce policies and practices that foster the success of ELLs' academic development.
- Increase professional development requirements and offerings that specifically address the needs of ELLs.

Considerations for the Classroom Context

- Have high expectations for ELLs' academic achievement.
- Design culturally relevant curricula for language-minority students.
- Utilize constructivist and transactional approaches to teaching and learning (such as cooperative learning, thematic-based instruction, flexible grouping, differentiated instruction, literature-based, student-centered classrooms, inquiry-based approach, etc.).
- Focus on developing high levels of language and literacy as a basis for achievement on all academic content.



- Educate teachers and administrators about students' and their families' cultural beliefs and norms, migratory experiences, economic and employment conditions, etc.

Considerations for the Parent and Family Context

- Communicate with parents in ways that show them respect and appreciation.
- Create a welcoming school environment for parents and families.
- Educate parents and families about the benefits of maintaining bilingualism and developing biliteracy.
- Inform parents and families about their rights and responsibilities (which may be different from those in their countries of origin), as well as the policies and responsibilities of the school system.
- Involve parents in governance and advocacy activities.
- Show parents how to access information and navigate the educational system in the United States.
- Provide language support and translation for parents and family members.

Conclusions

Enacting more effective instructional practices for ELLs calls for a shift in perspective. This paradigm shift must be from “a narrow and mechanistic view of instruction to one that is broader in scope and takes into consideration the sociohistorical and political dimensions of education” (Bartolomé 1994, 176). This perspective should compel educators to critically analyze the sociocultural and political realities in which subordinated students find themselves at school and the implicit and explicit antagonistic relations between students and teachers, as well as between communities and education systems. Demographic changes coupled with more stringent legal requirements and continued academic underachievement of language-minority students require urgent attention from educators and policy-makers alike.

In maintaining a certain coherence with the educational plan to reconstruct new and more democratic educational programs for linguistic minority students, educators and political leaders need to create a new school grounded in a new educational praxis...with the principles of a democratic, multicultural, and multilingual society. (Macedo 1997, 276)

Critical and culturally responsive education and transformative modes of teaching and learning enable students and teachers to break away from these adverse relationships and negative beliefs and allow for the creation of learning environments that are informed by both participatory action and critical reflection. Educating children of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is an inescapable challenge for school systems across the country.

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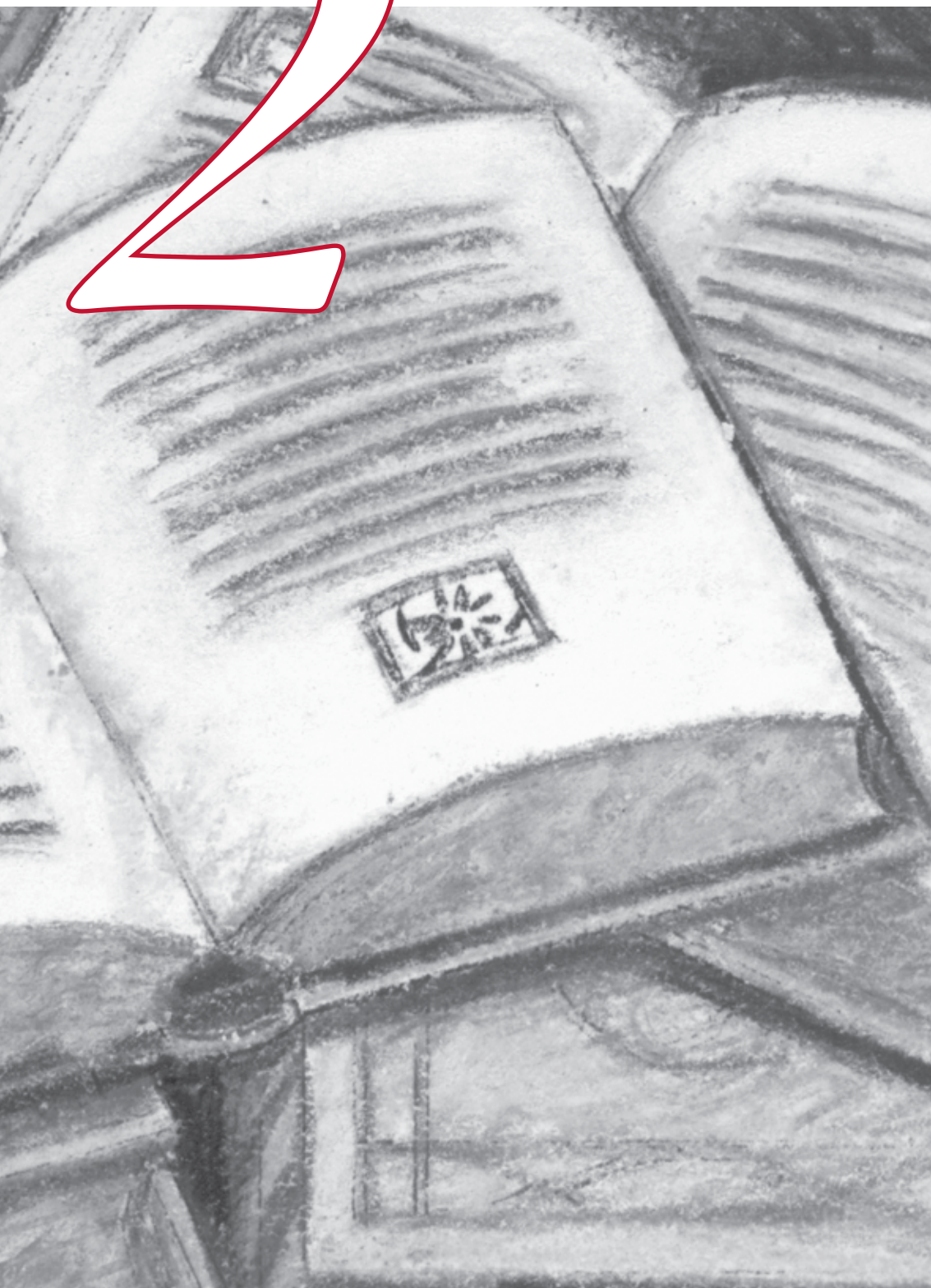


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Latino Families, Communities, and Schools as Partners in Education: Best Practice Models and Why They Work

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ABSTRACT

Latino youth educated in the United States are about twice as likely to drop out of school as their non-Latino white peers. Much of the available literature on the practices designed to surmount the educational barriers facing Latinos and increase their educational attainment has been more descriptive of the school-centered path to change than of the community-centered one. This essay seeks to profile strategies that have been specifically designed to increase Latino educational attainment by forging stronger connections among school, family, and community. The essay discusses several promising and nationally recognized community-centered models whose approach derives from research-based projects in predominantly Latino schools and communities and which have documented success with Latino students and families. These include the National Network for Partnership Schools, the Pilsen Education Network, the Migrant Even Start Program, the Santa Ana Partnership, the Mother-Daughter Program, and the Puente Project. These models involve parent and community participation in decision-making; focus on building trust, mutual respect, and sensitivity to linguistic and cultural differences; and demonstrate how partnerships and collaboration can be effectively deployed to engage Latinos in their education. Over the last 20 years, more community-centered practices have emerged in response to failing schools. These practices range from grassroots community organizing to the establishment of small schools to programs forging alliances between administrators and teachers and parents. The essay concludes with eleven principles that undergird community-centered models and challenge educational barriers; address the structural and complex interrelationships among school, family, learning, and community building; and acknowledge the social, economic, and political realities that exist for Latinos in the United States.

Latino Families, Communities, and Schools as Partners in Education: Best Practice Models and Why They Work



Introduction

Latinos compose the fastest growing ethnic minority in America. Between 1990 and 2000 the Latino population grew by more than 57 percent, while the population as a whole grew by only 13 percent. Between 2000 and 2002 the Latino population grew by 9.8 percent, and the overall population grew by 2.5 percent (Chapa and De La Rosa 2004).

Since Latinos tend to perform less well in schools than other groups, they are also worst off in educational attainment. As with all other ethnic groups, their performance improved slightly in the 1990s as measured by the “status dropout rate,” which “represents the fraction of a population in a given age bracket [16- to 19-year-olds] that has not completed high school and is not enrolled in school” (Fry 2003, 2). Their dropout rate fell from 21.6 percent in 1990 to 21 percent in 2000. However, Latinos are still more likely to drop out than other youths. In 2000, for instance, compared to the 21 percent of 16- to 19-year-old Latinos, only 8 percent of white youth and 12 percent of African American youth were dropouts. Latino dropouts also increased in absolute numbers, from 347,000 to 529,000, an increase of 52 percent. Fry (2003, 7) continues:

Even after removing the immigrants educated abroad from the calculations, Latino youth in U.S. schools are at a disadvantage compared to their peers in other ethnic and racial groups. The dropout rate of 15 percent for U.S.-educated 16- to 19-year-old Latino youth is higher than the comparable rate for African-Americans, 12 percent, and since the estimated dropout rate for white youth is 8 percent, Latino youth educated in the U.S. are about twice as likely to drop out of school as their white peers.

The high drop-out rate of Latinos educated abroad is another piece to this disturbing puzzle. While the dropout rate for all immigrant Latinos is 34 percent, the dropout rate for immigrant Latinos educated in the United States is 18 percent. For those educated abroad the rate is 90 percent. Overall, foreign-born Latinos fare worse than native-born Latinos. Compared to the 18 percent rate for foreign-born Latinos, for example, the rate for native-born Latinos is 14 percent. Among the foreign-born educated in the United States about 40 percent of immigrant 16- to 19-year-olds of Mexican descent are dropouts compared to 13 percent of immigrants from South America.

The abundant research on why Latinos are worse off educationally than other groups suggests they are more likely to enter school with significant



disadvantages: lack of student motivation; limited English proficiency and cultural barriers; high poverty rates; low levels of parental education; and lack of support from parents, teachers, and the community (Garcia 2001; Lockwood and Secada 1999; Rosario 2006a). In addition, Latino students are less likely to receive early childhood development through preschool programs; more likely to be retained in grade; less likely to be placed in gifted and talented education programs and advanced placement (AP) courses; less likely to complete high school and participate in federal education and related programs intended to increase high school graduation; less likely to pursue post-secondary education at four-year colleges; and less likely to obtain a bachelor's or advanced degree (Kohler and Lazarín 2007).

Much has also been written on the practices designed to surmount the educational barriers facing Latinos and increase their educational attainment (Garcia 2001; Lockwood and Secada 1999; Rosario 2006a; US Department of Education 2000). According to this literature, the kinds of strategies that work best for Latino students:

- 1) have adequate funding and provide comprehensive services, including case management;
- 2) provide services in Spanish and consciously and explicitly incorporate Latino cultures into programs;
- 3) actively involve parents in the academic experiences of their children, value parents as an asset and a resource, and are sensitive to family circumstances and traditions;
- 4) provide tools and opportunities for youth development and involve youth in the process;
- 5) have a dedicated and professional staff with a significant Latino presence;
- 6) involve the community as a support system to help youth achieve their goals;
- 7) create an authentic sense of community among participants through mutual caring and support.

We say more about these general features later in the text. For now we need only mention that the available literature on best practice has been more descriptive of the school-centered path to change than of the community-centered one (Honig, Kahne, and McLaughlin 2001; National Research Council 2004). While the former is more concerned with what schools can do *internally* to change organizational and instructional practice to meet Latino needs, the latter is concerned with what schools can do *externally* to engage Latino families and other community stakeholders in the educational process. Community-centered reforms derive from a communitarian perspective with a deep-seated history in American education (Rosario 2000).

According to communitarian sensibility, society consists of a common good that citizens must pursue together (Bellah et al. 1992). From this perspective, schooling of the young is a public and collective responsibility to be shared among social actors (e.g., families, government agencies, civic organizations, and private enterprises). In 1934 John Dewey (1989, 187), one of the tradition's strongest advocates, expressed this basic tenet while addressing the Rotarians on the issue of moral instruction:

If...we ask what the schools are doing and can do in forming character, we shall not expect too much from them. We shall realize that at best the schools can be but one agency among the very many that are active in forming

character. Compared with other influences that shape desire and purpose, the influence of the school is neither constant nor intense. Moral education of our children is in fact going on all the time, every waking hour of the day and three hundred and sixty-five days a year. Every influence that modifies the disposition and habits, the desires and thoughts of a child is a part of the development of his character.

Many decades later senator and presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton did much to spread this Deweyian sentiment when she transformed the African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child” into a much-publicized sound bite (Clinton 1996). But long before Clinton’s book appeared, the communitarian outlook on education had been quietly shaping our thinking about schools and how best to reform them (Cremin 1976; Merz and Furman 1997; Rosario 1981, 2000). A good example of where this re-thinking has led us is the small school movement, which under the banners of “less is more” and “high schools on a human scale” has been calling since the 1980s for an overhaul of America’s comprehensive high school (Meier 1995, 2002;Sizer 1984/1992; Toch 2003). Central to this cry is that high schools need to be downsized, decentralized, personalized, and individually tailored to meet the educational needs of students and families.

The call for small schools is not the only sign of a more communitarian approach to public schooling. Equally important has been the clamor for community engagement and parental involvement in our children’s education. Perhaps most representative of the shift to a more inclusive and partnering approach to the education of our young in the latter part of the twentieth century was the 1968 struggle for community control of schools in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville section of New York (Podair 2004). Since that conflictive push for greater parental and community voice in school governance, there has been a plethora of reforms designed to address the fact that for far too long schools and communities have been, in the words of Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot (1981), “worlds apart.”

To what extent have community-centered reforms succeeded in connecting the world of the school with the world of Latinos? This document attempts to answer that question by profiling strategies often absent in the literature on best practice: those that have been specifically designed to increase Latino educational attainment by forging stronger connections among school, family, and community. Based on analyses of published research and other resources, the profile purports to show how partnerships and collaboration can be effectively deployed to engage Latinos in their education.

We begin by sorting community-centered practices into two broad categories: those driven by schools and those driven by communities. We then describe the salient features of several promising and nationally recognized models, which were selected by applying two principal criteria: 1) The model has documented its success with Latino students and families, and 2) the model’s approach derives from research-based projects in predominantly Latino schools and communities. The models featured here are fairly representative of the variations in scope and design among preschool to university (PreK–16) programs (see, for example, Northwest Regional Education Laboratory 2005; Santiago and Brown 2004). The profile concludes with a discussion of the research-based principles that appear to account for model effectiveness.



Community-Centered Approaches to Engaging Latinos in Education

While community-centered approaches to engaging Latinos in education come in a variety of forms and complexities, they are supported by research findings linking family and community engagement to children's overall success (Boethel 2003; Henderson and Mapp 2002). These models also share three other features common to all communitarian-oriented reforms, whether school- or community-based. The first is that, to be effective, intervention strategies need to see schools in asset terms as part of a broader ecology of influential agents composed of families, neighborhood groups, and community organizations (Delgado-Gaitan 2004; Dryfoos, Quinn, and Barkin 2005; National Research Council 2004). Community-centered approaches recast many of the educational issues facing Latinos as community-wide concerns that implicate constituencies outside the school. Issues like school safety and student performance, for example, are not just school matters; they are collective development concerns that are best managed by mobilizing community groups and individuals in order to solve them.

The second feature concerns the kinds of parent and community partnerships models propose. Epstein (2001), for instance, identifies six types of partners:

- 1) *parenting*—those who assist parents in child-rearing;
- 2) *communicating*—those who strengthen school-to-home and home-to-school communication;
- 3) *volunteering*—those who recruit and organize parents for school volunteering;
- 4) *learning at home*—those who train parents in how to help children with their homework and other curriculum-related activities at home;
- 5) *decision-making*—those who engage parents in school decision-making and equip them with leadership abilities; and
- 6) *collaborating with community*—those who identify and mobilize community resources to reinforce learning in school and home.

Baum (2003, 32–33) collapses Epstein's types into three: "tacit partnerships, in which parents and teachers engage in complementary activities without contact" (Epstein's types 1 and 4); face-to-face partnerships that allow "individual parents [to] meet, talk, and make formal arrangements with individual staff members" (Epstein's types 2 and 3); and formal partnerships that may allow "a group of parents or an organization [to] take authoritative, influential roles with schools, with arrangements outlined in explicit and elaborate agreements" (Epstein's types 5 and 6). Premised on a distinction between parent involvement (his types 1 and 2) and partnerships (his type 3), Baum's types "vary in explicitness, membership, purpose, member obligations, and power and status relations. They range from occasional parental or community assistance to a school to ongoing powerful collaboration between staff and parents or community members" (34).

The third element shared in common bears on the conditions that make for effective partnerships. Whether school-driven or community-driven, school-community initiatives must be of high quality in order to succeed. Too often best practices are undermined by ineffective implementation. Effective partnership practices share several general features that help account for their effectiveness (Dryfoos, Quinn, and Barkin 2005; Epstein et al. 2002; US

Department of Education
2000):

- an emphasis on building relationships characterized by mutual respect, trust, and caring and on maintaining those relationships over time;
- open, two-way dialogue and shared decision-making among the partners;
- adequate funding and time for planning and implementation;
- effective leadership at the school, district, and state levels that both communicates to parents and staff the priority given to partnering with family and community and creates building-level support for the shared vision;
- action planning that is directly linked to the school's improvement goals, especially curricular and instructional reform goals;
- high-quality professional development for those responsible for implementation;
- flexible programming of outreach and interventions tailored to each school-community to maximize participation of all families regardless of their circumstances;
- presence of bilingual, bicultural Latino staff members;
- awareness or involvement of the entire school faculty; and
- sustained, incremental improvement based on evaluation.

In community-centered practices these general features manifest themselves in ways that are sensitive and responsive to the language, culture, and economic circumstances of Latino families. Teachers build trusting one-on-one relationships with Latino parents by overcoming the barriers of language and lack of familiarity with the family's background, home, and culture. They learn some Spanish, use bilingual parents and students as translators, visit homes, and get to know the community.

Administrators create a welcoming school climate by hiring a bilingual office receptionist and other staff who assist parents and teachers with communication. Open-door policies require staff and school leaders to meet any parent arriving at the school, even if they have to interrupt what they are doing. Schools do not rely on channeling all communication (and hence relationship building) to bilingual members of the school staff; the entire faculty assumes a share in the responsibility for connecting to its Latino students and families. All communications with families, whether by mail, telephone, or messenger, are bilingual. So are decision-making meetings in which Spanish-speaking parents or community members are present. Schools with immigrant and low-income families help overcome potential family constraints by offering activities in Spanish, providing transportation and childcare if needed, and scheduling events to accommodate working parents. Schools are not discouraged by initial low participation but develop, sustain, and improve their programs over





time, understanding that genuine trust builds gradually. How earnestly these general features are embodied in practice will reflect the quality of the complex interaction among school personnel, families, and community members.

Successful community-centered partnerships require additional time, resources, and effort if they are to reach out with the necessary institutional adaptations that work for Latino families and communities. The ‘whatever it takes’ approach, combined with consistent, continuous attention to building on successes, typically works best, and what matters, research tells us, is that schools have well-designed and well-implemented outreach and family-community programs (Epstein et al. 2002, 11).

But while community-centered practices share common elements, they differ in how they operate and in the principal interest guiding them. School-driven approaches (e.g., Partnership Schools, the Comer School Development Program, Accelerated Schools, and Success for All) start *inside* schools and *radiate outwards* to engage parents and community in an effort to reform schooling practices and increase student learning (Delgado-Gaitan 2004; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory 2005). Community-driven approaches, by contrast begin *outside* schools *within* communities and *radiate inwards* to incorporate schools as part of broader community development projects (e.g., the Community Schools of the Children’s Aid Society, Alliance Schools of Valley Interfaith, and new community-based organization [CBO] schools; Baum 2003; Crowson 2001; Dryfoos, Quinn, and Barkin 2005; Shirley 2002). While these latter practices also aim to reform schooling and increase achievement, they are propelled by concern for overall improvements in the general welfare of a community. Changing schools and increasing learning, in this view, are principally about reforming the political economy shaping and constraining lives. As such, these practices are more aligned with educational reformers interested in rethinking and expanding conceptions of community development and placing education at the center of their agenda (Anyon 2005; Noguera 2003).

Universities are major participants in school reform. At times they align themselves more closely with schools and at other times with community. While they are themselves the ‘originators’ and ‘drivers’ behind specific initiatives (e.g., the Santa Ana Partnership, the Mother Daughter Program, Funds of Knowledge), we have positioned them here according to whether they identify themselves primarily with schools or with community.

What do community-centric models look like? We consider this question in the next section by examining school-driven practices first.

School-Driven Community-Centered Models

School-driven, community-centered practices divide roughly into two types: single or comprehensive. While well-implemented comprehensive reforms are known to demonstrate an impact on overall school achievement, the effects of single interventions are more narrow, such as specific increases in the amount of homework turned in, number of books read, or hours of volunteer service in the school (Aladjem and Borman 2006; Henderson and Mapp 2002). Single interventions sometimes lead to more integrated efforts with a wider impact.

We focus here primarily on comprehensive programs because of the greater likelihood of improvement in student performance and broad appeal to low-performing schools and districts. We define a comprehensive model as one that

includes more than a single intervention and whose family and community components are integrated into an overall approach to improvement.

The National Network for Partnership Schools (NNPS)

The Center for Family, School, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University is a widely recognized national center for creating, training, and documenting family-school-community partnerships (Epstein et al. 2002). Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at the center have developed a National Network for Partnership Schools (NNPS) model that includes a framework for engaging family and community. The model, which has been successfully adopted by schools and districts interested in reaching out to parents, including Latino families, calls for schools to form Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs). ATPs are assigned responsibility for assessing current school practices, creating new options for partnerships, planning and implementing programs/activities, as well as evaluating and improving programs over time—all within the framework of the six types of family involvement mentioned earlier: 1) parenting, 2) communicating, 3) volunteering, 4) learning at home, 5) decision-making, and 6) collaborating with the community. The teams create a three-year outline and a one-year action plan detailing programs and activities targeting one or more types of family involvement.

ATPs are composed of teachers, parents, administrators, community members, and sometimes students in the case of high schools. A handbook for implementing NNPS guides the ATPs through the reform process, and a website providing access to “success stories” and other resources supports their planning. Program activities aim to surround children with the kinds of family and community “caring behaviors” they need in support of their learning. The stories in Table 1 serve to illustrate how the types of family involvement in the NNPS model are implemented in Latino communities.

Table 1. Success Stories from NNPS Sites in Latino Communities
<p>Illustration 1. An ATP organized an informal Neighborhood Outreach event (type 6) at a convenient, relaxed location in the neighborhood where families and school staff could meet face to face (type 2), get to know and feel comfortable with each other, and increase their level of trust. School staff and community partners, including a local pastor, civic association, businesses, and others, provided food as well as educational materials (books, supplies, games) that families could take home. The school, students, and community partners shared responsibility for inviting families (type 2). This provided the school with a valuable ‘gateway’ activity for identifying parent leaders and developing future programs.</p> <p>Another school selected a similar comfortable, convenient meeting place in the community to engage immigrant families in an informal, yet informative exchange around the topic of literacy and share activities, materials, and ideas for learning at home (type 4).</p> <p>Sources: Salinas et al. (2005); Brownstein et al. (2006).</p>
<p>Illustration 2. Teachers collaborated with the community (type 6) on a Family Literacy Night aimed at improving literacy knowledge and activities in the home (type 4) that drew almost 200 linguistically diverse parents and children into the school. All necessary materials, including flyers announcing the event were translated and widely distributed (type 2). Stations were set up for a variety of literacy-related activities: Sight Word Bingo, PageAhead workshop, card-making, writing workshop, and an ‘open mic’ for poetry. The public library signed up students and families for library cards and provided orientation to their services. Families went home with donated books and handouts and new experiences for increasing literacy in the home. Local businesses provided refreshments and raffle prizes. Enthusiastic parents were recruited to help with next year’s event (type 3).</p> <p>Source: Salinas et al. (2005).</p>



Illustration 3. In another school, a motivated Latino parent volunteer, supported by the school staff and a community Americorps volunteer, built and led a Latino parent association that recruited other families and organized programs and activities based on their needs (type 5 and 6). People who attended appreciated speaking freely with each other and expressing their concerns as parents, as well as learning from the various programs offered (types 1, 2). Parent volunteers organized a Mexican fiesta for the school, which raised funds for another school event on Mother's Day (type 3).

Source: Salinas et al. (2004).

Illustration 4. TIPS (Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork), a type 4 (learning at home) activity, developed and well-researched by Epstein and her colleagues, has been successful in improving homework completion, readiness for class, and subject-matter skills. Teachers develop and use content-specific interactive homework assignments that involve a family partner, ideally on a weekly basis. Using specially designed assignments, the family member is guided by the student to participate in a variety of possible ways: listen to the student's reading, writing, or explanations; contribute ideas, memories, or experiences; ask questions; observe or participate in a demonstration. The family partner is also invited to provide feedback on home-to-school communication notes (type 2). These assignments are intended to keep parents informed about the learning in which students are engaged and encourage conversation and support in the home around schoolwork in general and around specific subject areas. TIPS responds directly to parents' concerns: They want to support their children's learning at home, but they need more information about how to help. Because the student is guiding the parent's participation, these homework assignments can be accomplished in the home language.

Source: Epstein et al. (2002).

The School Development Program

The School Development Program model, also called the Comer Process or Yale School Development model, was developed in 1968 by child psychiatrist James Comer of Yale University to help low-achieving inner-city schools become more successful in educating low-income, minority children. While implemented initially in schools serving primarily African American children, the model also enjoys wide adoption in elementary through high schools serving Latino and Asian American youth.

With an interest in fostering healthy relationships between school and home, Comer's model emphasizes professional development focused on understanding children's holistic development and home culture and on mobilizing the entire community of adult caretakers. Distinguished from others by the application of child and adolescent development principles to school decision-making, the model has a forty-year track record in demonstrating outcomes as measured by

standardized test scores, increased parent involvement, and lower incidences of student 'acting out' behaviors (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory 2005).

The School Development Program consists of nine elements that reduce to three mechanisms, three operations, and three guiding principles. The three mechanisms include: 1) the School Planning and Management Team,



composed of administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and others, which is responsible for developing and monitoring the Comprehensive School Plan; 2) the Student and Staff Support Team, composed of social workers, counselors, special educators, and other staff with child development and mental health backgrounds, which oversees the social climate of the school; and 3) the Parent Team, composed primarily of parents with responsibility for parent engagement in all areas of school life.

Like other comprehensive reform models, the Comer process requires that schools develop three operational blueprints: a Comprehensive School Plan to give direction to the school improvement process; a Staff Development Plan to focus teacher training on the priorities set by the comprehensive plan; and an Assessment and Monitoring Process to generate data and guide improvement. Finally, the model orients stakeholders to the three guiding principles that are to guide them in framing their interactions: a no-fault philosophy for problem solving; collaboration in decision-making; and commitment to consensus-building. In the words of a former School Development Program facilitator who implemented the model in a Latino immigrant community, the Comer principles “lessen the incidence of miscommunication and disenfranchisement and are especially important in dealing with families of immigrant children” (Johns 2001, guiding principles section, para. 1).

Success for All

Merlinda Elementary School in West Covina, California, adopted Success for All (SFA), a comprehensive school reform model that was awarded the highest ranking of Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) models reviewed by the American Research Institute (Aladjem and Borman 2006). SFA targets student achievement through the use of cooperative learning strategies, a cycle-of-learning approach to instruction, and ongoing monitoring and use of assessment data. Since SFA also values family and community engagement in student learning, there are provisions in the model for tailoring family programs to fit individual schools.

Merlinda’s family component includes parents in decision-making and in hosting school-wide events, such as quarterly Family Nights. A “skill of the week,” which is posted on the school marquee, is integrated into the instruction of all subject areas and communicated to parents, along with supporting resources and activities, to help students practice at home. Over a five-year period such efforts have allowed Merlinda to increase its reading scores at or above grade-level from 6 percent to 80 percent (DeNoi 2003). These results appear to confirm one of Henderson and Mapp’s (2002, 38) key findings: “family involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement.”

Project SEED

Texas-based Project SEED (Santiago and Brown 2004; see also Project SEED n.d.) exemplifies a successful national mathematics program for elementary and middle school youth that also integrates a family and community component. SEED trains elementary and high school teachers in a unique mathematics curriculum using a Socratic group-discovery format. These teachers then offer direct instruction to elementary and middle school students as a supplement to their regular curriculum. To reinforce this instruction and support student



success, SEED also sponsors workshops for parents and community members to familiarize them with the project's content and methods.

Repeated and consistent evaluation results, including longitudinal evaluation over a twelve-year period, show that SEED students outscore a matched comparison group after only one semester in the project and that the effects increase for every semester of SEED instruction. After five years of their last exposure to SEED instruction, students still outscored their comparison group on mathematics achievement tests. SEED students also took more advanced mathematics courses in secondary schools and were required to repeat a grade less often.

Project ALAS

Project ALAS targets middle schoolers at high risk of dropping out, including special education students. The model has four components: 1) a student-centered component calling for social-problem-solving training and counseling, recognition of student achievement, and enhancement of school-student bonding; 2) a school component centered on frequent teacher feedback to parents and students about academic progress and attendance; 3) a family component based on accessing community resources and providing parent training to support students' in-school and out-of school participation; and 4) a community component to foster collaboration between nonprofit organizations and the juvenile justice system to ensure project students have advocates. By the end of ninth grade, 100 percent of the students in ALAS were still enrolled in high school and 80 percent were on track for graduation (Garcia 2001).

The Pilsen Education Network (PEN)

The Pilsen Education Network (PEN), in collaboration with Strategic Learning Initiatives (SLI), is an example of a school-driven partnership focused on comprehensive reform in a 'feeder-cluster' of schools in the Mexican neighborhood of Pilsen in the Chicago area. The SLI model (Holloway 2004; Schnaiberg 2004) consists of three overlapping components (parent engagement, shared leadership, and professional development) designed to create a culture of continuous adult learning and improvement in support of student achievement. The parent component calls for parents to share leadership with administrators and teachers and to be trained in facilitating parent workshops—up to fourteen during a school year, all designed to help parents connect with each other and schools, build social networks, and support their children. On average, over 30 percent of network parents attend PEN workshops. One key to SLI success has been the level of openness and trust it has fostered between parents and schools as a result of the parent networks developed in project schools. Student gains as measured by test scores indicate that the rate of improvement in reading and math over a three-year period is two to three times as high as comparison schools with similar family income levels (SLI 2006).

The Migrant Even Start Program (MES)

There is ample evidence that early childhood programs with parent involvement components (preferably home based) affect children's school readiness and eventual high school performance (Henderson and Mapp 2002; National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics 2007). The Pennsylvania-based Migrant Even Start Program (MES) serves to illustrate this long-standing finding (Santiago and Brown 2004). MES tailors its interventions by using

programs (e.g., PIAGET, STARK) specifically designed for building effective home-school relations and addressing literacy needs of pre-schoolers with limited English proficiency. MES also provides adult English/Spanish literacy classes, basic education (GED), computer training, and English as a Second Language for parents and extended family members.



As a result, MES children have demonstrated improvements in school readiness skills, with significant gains in English, auditory vocabulary, and cognitive measures. This is especially important for English-language learners (ELLs). Research demonstrates that MES-like practices “account for between one-quarter and one-half of racial/ethnic readiness gaps at the start of kindergarten” (National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics 2007, 25).

The Santa Ana Partnership

With origins in the University of California system, the Santa Ana Partnership represents a multi-institutional, university-school-community partnership (Santa Ana College, University of California Irvine, California State University, Unified Public School District of Santa Ana, community-based organizations, parents, and students) dedicated principally to increasing Latino educational attainment and placing all students in predominantly Latino Santa Ana on a successful pathway to college. Initiated in 1983, this collaborative has been working on several fronts at all grade levels, from PreK to university, and has realized multiple outcomes: increased enrollment of Latino students in college; increased transfer rate of Latino students from two-year to four-year colleges; increased opportunities for students to learn about and commit to higher education; one-stop access to college information in high schools; increased number of students taking the SAT, applying to, and being accepted into college; more rigorous K–12 programs to prepare for college; increased student achievement in language arts and math assessment in the elementary and high schools; and development of student support programs jointly administered by members of the partnership (Cournoyer n.d., 7).

The Santa Ana Partnership is guided by its *Blueprint for Change*, a strategic plan outlining actions and policy changes at local, state, and national levels, from preschool to graduate school, needed to support Latino success and mobility in the educational pipeline. The plan addresses five areas: Core Curriculum and Support Services; Professional Development and Faculty Leadership; Student Leadership; Family Engagement and Leadership; and Community Capacity Building and Business Engagement. Some strategies draw upon existing programs that have demonstrated success with Latino students, such as AVID, Puente, and MESA. Others rely on local innovations, like the *Camino de Amistad*/Walk for Success, a transition to high school activity that engages teachers, parent



volunteers, and high school juniors and seniors in visiting the homes of incoming freshman—to welcome them to high school, answer questions, and talk about the importance of studying and preparing for college.

Family and community engagement activities include “*pláticas*/educational dialogues” with family and community members about higher education; literacy and math centers that provide in-home training for parents; and weekend residential programs for parents at the university. There are also prescriptions in the partnership’s *Blueprint* to ensure coherence and coordination among program areas and across grade levels to maximize impact.

The Mother Daughter Program

Initiated in 1986 at the University of Texas at El Paso and replicated in other sites across the nation, the Mother Daughter Program reaches out to Latina students and their mothers to help them realize a greater sense of personal empowerment (Mother Daughter Program 2007; Delgado-Gaitan 2004). Working through local schools or community-based organizations, the program engages sixth grade girls and their mothers in a variety of monthly activities that include discussions of life options with successful Latina students and career women who participate in the program as role models; field trips to colleges and universities; and joint participation in “career days” and community service projects. The program emphasizes the importance of goal setting in four key areas: academic, personal, career, and community life. After sixth grade, the mothers and daughters continue to participate in career days and leadership activities, as well as in serving as role models to younger participants.

The Puente Project

Cosponsored by the University of California and the California Community Colleges, the Puente Project, which has been operating since 1981, currently serves 56 community colleges and 36 high schools in the state. It, too, is a bridge-to-university program aimed at improving high school graduation and transfer rates from community college to university. The three-part model involves an extensive community mentoring component, sustained academic counseling for students and parents, and accelerated English/writing courses incorporating the study of Latino literature. Puente provides training to English teachers and counselors to apply Puente pedagogy and practices at their sites (e.g., using small, cooperative learning communities of mixed achievement levels in classrooms, building close relationships with parents and students, monitoring and ongoing support, organizing field trips, and participating in community service).

Following the same three-part design, the High School Puente program concentrates its activities in the ninth and tenth grades. By the time participating students are juniors, they have taken more college-prep courses, have higher GPAs, and are confident they know how to apply for college (Garcia 2001, 216). They graduate from high school and community college in larger numbers than their peers and go on to attend four-year institutions at almost twice the rate of their non-Puente peers. In addition, 86 percent of principals, head counselors, and English chairpersons report that their Puente high school had changed, largely due to high parent involvement (Puente Project 2003).

* * * * *

In sum, a reigning premise of the school-driven models profiled above is that student achievement gains are likely to result from comprehensive, sustained

reforms that include high expectations, high-quality programs, and family and community engagement. Family and community activities, however, need to be linked specifically to subject matter in order to show gains in target areas. Eventually, consistent academic gains pave the way for school-family connections to become integral parts of educational life. To the extent that these models include parent and community participation in decision-making, as well as focus on building trust, mutual respect, and sensitivity to linguistic and cultural differences, the models are adaptable to meet the needs and concerns of Latino communities. In the next section we explore practices that aim to reform schools from a different perspective.

Community-Driven Community-Centered Models

Over the last twenty years a more community-driven approach to educational reform has emerged in response to the nation's challenge of failing schools. While the approach may vary in form and complexity depending on local needs and conditions, these efforts share a common underlying premise: that parents and community members need to assume greater responsibility for what transpires in their schools and that dramatic changes are called for in the way schools are designed, governed, and held accountable. Our first example representing these community-driven *and* community-centered approaches to school reform is community schools.

Community Schools

In the late 1980s the *Children's Aid Society (CAS)*, a not-for-profit children's service organization in New York City, approached the New York Public Schools with a proposal to collaborate on the development of "community schools" in District 6. The first site to be selected for the creation of these new schools was the Washington Heights neighborhood because of its predominantly low-income, recent immigrant population (largely from the Dominican Republic), its overcrowded schools, and the lack of social services in the area. What CAS envisioned was a different kind of school designed to target the *overall development* of children *as well as* their families. The school was to be an institution unlike other schools in that it called for fusing "a high-quality educational institution, a health clinic, a community center, and a social service organization...[that] would open early, close late, and remain active throughout the summer, weekends and holidays" (Coltoff 2005, 9). The collaboration was formalized in a legally binding resolution in 1990, and CAS's first community school, Salomé Ureña de Henríquez Middle Academies (IS 218), opened in 1992.

From the beginning, CAS's concept of community schools included a three-way partnership—the Board of Education, CAS, *and* parents. The role of parents was central and the goal of parent involvement was empowerment. Parent coordinators in CAS's model had a different take on family involvement from Epstein's. According to a CAS parent coordinator, parent empowerment meant:

- knowing and understanding your rights and the rights of your children so you can make appropriate choices and engage in negotiations to ensure that these rights are met;
- understanding your children's development processes;
- understanding the educational system and process and being able to differentiate good and bad instruction so as to have a true impact on your children's education;
- influencing school culture;



- educating yourself about resources that may expand your children's opportunities;
- building alliances to tap the power of other parents; and
- becoming a lifelong learner to better your own and your children's opportunities (as quoted in Méndez 2005, 45).

Implementing the parent empowerment model at a CAS community school begins with the establishment of a family resource center staffed by a parent coordinator connected to the community. This individual, often a former parent leader, is responsible for coordinating and developing with parents the various activities created for the school: volunteer and mentoring opportunities, training workshops, classes, advisory councils, clubs, ongoing assessment of needs and assets, information gatherings, celebrations, and referrals. The coordinator acts to ensure a welcoming climate in the school and in the family resource center. Centers are located near the entrance to the school and are friendly, inviting, generous spaces with living-room furniture, plants, and a fresh pot of coffee, where family members meet, hold classes, and interact informally with staff and other parents. Often, social workers' offices are housed within or near the resource center to be more accessible to families. This also allows social workers to "interact with parents in informal ways to help de-stigmatize the need for mental health services, which are often taboo in Latin cultures" (Méndez 2005, 48). Parent coordinators provide leadership training and opportunities for mobilization so that parents can advocate for their school and community interests, such as street crossing safety, administrative accountability, and program funding at the city and state levels.

The core components of a community school model include: 1) an extended day program offering enrichment before and after school and during the weekends and summers; 2) medical, dental, mental health, and social services; 3) comprehensive parent involvement; 4) early childhood intervention; 5) adult education; 6) community-wide events; and 7) a high-quality academic program with a community-oriented curriculum that includes service and project-based learning in the community. Extended-day programming is considered an essential component of a community school. Its purpose is to bridge the community-school divide and to offset the negative influences of unsupervised after-school time by replacing them with constructive learning experiences (Newman et al. 2000). Community partners design their schools to fit their vision and community's priorities.

CAS also works to impact the neighborhood's economic development through its capital investments, hiring practices, outsourcing of services, entrepreneurship programs, financial literacy workshops, and a student banking program. According to CAS officials, the agency invested over \$125 million in the first ten years of the Washington Heights community schools. This investment, CAS argues, "has allowed many of our students to complete high school and college, find meaningful employment, stay connected to the community, work in our schools, and serve as role models to their peers. They have contributed to the development of a community that has become more optimistic about the future because it sees more kids graduating from high school and college, more kids staying out of trouble and off the streets, and more kids avoiding high-risk behaviors and making a difference in the community" (Green 2005, 122).

CAS now operates 21 community schools in New York City spanning the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and the community school model has been replicated widely in the United States and overseas. CAS's evaluations of its work have led the agency to develop a framework entitled "Stages of Development of a CAS Community School" (Chu-Zhu 2005, 207–18). The framework helps partnerships identify ways of increasing outcomes. The agency also developed a Center for Technical Assistance to support its schools.

An example of a community school outside New York, *Spry Community School*, a PreK–12 school in the predominantly Mexican Little Village neighborhood in the Chicago area, was developed in collaboration with, among others, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. A cofounder of General Motors, Charles Stewart Mott was a long-time proponent of a more flexible school calendar to fit the modern, industrialized and urbanized work force. At Spry, the school day begins at 9:00 a.m. for elementary students but at 11:00 a.m. for high school students. High school students attend school for eight hours a day, attend all year long, and consequently graduate in three years. This accelerated high school calendar advantages the low-income youth in this community in at least two ways: It engages them constructively until graduation; and it allows them to compete for jobs requiring only a high school diploma and/or enter college a year before their peers in other schools.

As part of their academic preparation, Spry students are required to participate in community service and internship programs, which are intended to connect them more closely to community partners and careers. Community partners offer internships for students, adult education, and after-school programs. The achievement scores of elementary students at the school are increasing annually and on many measures catching up with state averages. Spry's high school graduation rate is almost 100 percent (George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2007).

* * * * *

In general, community schools have made an impact on youth, families, schools, and community (Blank, Melaville, and Shah 2003). Besides increased student achievement, community schools have documented other successes: increased student and teacher attendance; increased parent involvement; stronger teacher-parent relations; improved school climate; decreased special education and discipline referrals/suspensions; improved mental and physical health; improved use of school building; improved neighborhood security; and improved rapport between students and community residents. A *Coalition of Community Schools* network provides support to communities interested in adopting this model (www.communityschools.org).

Community Organizing

Believing that revitalized communities can achieve more for their children, some community-based organizations attack school reform through grassroots organizing. While their approach has yielded mixed results in producing student-level outcomes, these organizations have made important advances in improving their communities (Baum 2003; Henderson and Mapp 2002; Shirley 2002). *Valley Interfaith* in South Texas is one such example. The organization was launched in the 1980s with the help of the *Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF)*, a Saul Alinsky-style community-organizing enterprise, focused on developing "organizations that use power—organized people and organized money—in effective ways" (IAF 2006b, para. 3).



Applying lessons learned from an earlier period of organizing and political action in the lower Rio Grande Valley, IAF helped this low-income border community rebuild its power base. IAF organizers first identified the community's local talent in order to "cultivate it in an explicitly political direction" (Shirley 2002, 11). Believing that churches already possess one of the strongest forms of 'bonding social capital' in the Latino community, IAF focused its talent search among the churches and organized them as Valley Interfaith. With the mission of holding public officials accountable and equipped with organizing strategies, this new organization bridged social capital and built civic capacity by mobilizing social networks of farm workers, realtors, school personnel, and local businesses.

At well-orchestrated mass community meetings, called accountability sessions, community members, armed with issue-driven data as well as questions based on those data, challenged officials to account for what they as public servants had accomplished in their community. By the second half of the 1980s Valley Interfaith had succeeded in getting the Texas state legislature to approve badly needed funds to improve water, drainage, and paved roads in the *colonias*. With these victories in hand, Valley Interfaith turned to schools that sought to partner with them on school improvement efforts and brought them into the *Alliance School* network organized by IAF.

Valley Interfaith believes that professionalism is what keeps teachers and administrators apart and out of touch with their surrounding communities. As a result, Interfaith organizers employ strategies to assist teachers and administrators to break out of their roles as professionals and transform them into community advocates. They engage school personnel in the community through one-on-one meetings with parents and other community members, home visits, neighborhood walks, house gatherings, "research actions," and accountability sessions. These grassroots efforts gradually develop "new forms of horizontal ties that link teachers with parents, religious institutions, and community-based organizations in a rich web of relationships" (Shirley 2002, 91). For many school personnel these experiences effect a transformation in their attitudes, relationships, and classroom practices:

No, we have not always taught this way. First, we had many conversations with Valley Interfaith organizers... In those conversations we were agitated. In fact, quite a bit. These conversations got us to thinking about relationships and power. We recognized that we did not have relationships to parents that were meaningful for the overall achievement of students. The more we thought about it, the more we realized that we needed to change. The first step in this change happened at the old Sam Houston through the first house meetings. We started to deal with issues that were important to our parents. The issues were serious ones—safety and others. Working with the parents on these issues made us see the parents as allies.

Today, we find that working in isolation like so many teachers is not for us. We find that collaborating with each other is more effective for student learning. We now believe that education is the responsibility of not only the teachers but also administrators, parents, and community members. This belief has encouraged us to involve the parents as well as the community in the education of their children. We discovered that parents have so much to contribute. We have learned so much from each other. (Shirley 2002, 91–92)

As a result of organizing and lobbying efforts, between 1995 and 1999 Alliance Schools received \$500,000 in additional funding from the state legislature and the Valley community received a new housing development and a new elementary school to replace an old one. In addition, a community college satellite moved into the vacated elementary school to bring additional adult education and training into the community.

Despite ten years of organizing only one Alliance school received an exemplary achievement award from the state for one year. However, by 2002 all sixteen Alliance schools, many of which had been “low-performers,” received “recognized” or “acceptable” status from the state. Unlike other schools in the district, which tend to bounce on and off the state’s low-performing lists, the Alliance Schools have sustained their gains despite the continuing economic and social stresses in their surrounding communities (Pyle 2002). The Alliance School concept of connecting the local school “more constructively” to its surrounding community is now practiced in many school districts across the Southwest and West (IAF 2006a, Alliance Schools section).

Community organizing in education has burgeoned over the last two decades in several parts of the country. The *Indicators Project on Education Organizing* examined the activities of five such efforts—IAF’s Austin Interfaith, PICO/OCO, ACORN, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, and the Alliance Organizing Project—and developed a framework describing the ways in which community organizing strategies actually improve local schools. As shown in Table 2, the framework points to eight areas where the use of multiple strategies have produced results.

Table 2. The Education Organizing Indicators Framework		
Key Areas	Strategies	Partial List of Results
Leadership Development	<p>Identify and train parents and community members (and sometimes teachers, principals, and students) to take on leadership roles.</p> <p>Develop parents (and community members and school staff) as politically engaged citizens.</p> <p>Promote individual, family, and community empowerment.</p>	<p>Parents and/or community members hold leadership positions and feel knowledgeable about their role in school reform and in the process of making change.</p> <p>Politicians are aware of the issues that concern parents, youth, and school staff and are responsive to them.</p> <p>Parents, students, and teachers are increasing their skills and pursuing their own education opportunities.</p>
Community Power	<p>Create a mass base constituency within communities that results in deep membership commitment and large turnout.</p> <p>Form partnerships for legitimacy and expertise.</p> <p>Create a strong organizational identity.</p> <p>Draw political attention to the organization’s agenda.</p>	<p>Ability to turn out membership base and sustain a campaign over time</p> <p>Community groups and partners gain a seat at policy decision-making tables.</p> <p>Parents and others see their values and concerns guiding the work.</p> <p>Media acknowledge the role of the organizing group in school reform.</p>



Social Capital	<p>Build networks.</p> <p>Build relationships of mutual trust and reciprocity.</p> <p>Increase participation in civic life.</p>	<p>Reduced feelings of isolation</p> <p>Schools perceive groups as assets and resources.</p> <p>Parents are spokespeople.</p>
Public Accountability	<p>Create a public conversation about public education and student achievement.</p> <p>Monitor programs and policies.</p> <p>Participate in the political arena.</p> <p>Create joint ownership/relational culture.</p>	<p>Media coverage of school problems and inequities</p> <p>Move to problem-solving and monitoring results.</p> <p>Strategic use of the vote</p> <p>Parents feel knowledgeable about schools and teachers feel knowledgeable about families and communities.</p>
Equity	<p>Increase funding and resources to under-resourced schools.</p> <p>Maximize access of low-income children to educational opportunities.</p> <p>Match teaching and learning conditions with those in the best schools.</p>	<p>New school facilities and professional development for teachers</p> <p>New small schools open and new options are offered at existing schools.</p> <p>New incentives to attract teachers and improved adult-child ratios</p>
School/Community Connection	<p>Create multi-use school buildings.</p> <p>Position the community as a resource.</p> <p>Create multiple roles for parents in schools.</p> <p>Create joint ownership of school and school decision-making.</p>	<p>Greater use of school building as a public space</p> <p>Parents feel welcome, valued, and respected in schools.</p> <p>Increase in programs resulting from collaboration</p>
Positive School Culture	<p>Improve facilities.</p> <p>Improve safety in and around the school.</p> <p>Create a respectful school environment.</p> <p>Build intimate setting for teacher/student relations.</p>	<p>Parents, teachers, and community members feel pride in school.</p> <p>Reduced number of incidents and disciplinary actions</p> <p>Curriculum reflects concerns and issues facing the community.</p>
High-quality Instruction and Curriculum	<p>Identify learning needs, carry out research, and implement new teaching initiative and structures.</p> <p>Enhance staff professionalism.</p> <p>Make parents and community partners in children's education.</p> <p>Hold high expectations.</p>	<p>Increased parent and teacher knowledge about strategies and conditions that improve learning</p> <p>Increased teacher retention and use of community</p> <p>Improved test scores and graduation rates.</p>
Source: Excerpted from Gold, Simon, and Brown (2002, 50–59).		

Funds of Knowledge

Funds of Knowledge, developed by University of Arizona professor Luis Moll and colleagues, draws on anthropology to help teachers connect with their students and families. The approach, which appears more aligned with community than with schools, requires that teachers interview parents in their homes, record ethnographic observations, and engage family members in conversations about what they know: their child-rearing and educational beliefs and practices, their work and significant life experiences, their hopes

and expectations for their children, and the nature of their social and family networks. These data are then discussed and analyzed by the teachers in small study groups to identify the important household “funds of knowledge” that as teachers they can connect to and draw on in their classroom practice. These funds of knowledge are the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household individual functioning and well-being” (Moll et al. 1992, 133).

Ethnographic inquiry into a family’s household knowledge relies on the openness of a teacher to seeing and hearing beyond any preconceptions that he or she may have. It situates the teacher in the parents’ and child’s world, where the child can be seen as a whole person, where extended family relationships and interactions are made knowable, and where the richness and depth of the child’s context and at-home learning can be explored. Teachers, even Latina/o teachers who may share similar roots but not know the circumstances of their students, find the understanding of their students altered and enriched. This new knowledge has allowed them to initiate respectful, closer relationships with parents and family members and build classroom practice on what students already know. In many cases, teachers have identified parents who readily welcome the opportunities to share their skills and knowledge in the classroom or in other settings (e.g., the PTA, leadership councils, and school events; Amanti 2005). Household funds of knowledge provide a wealth of ideas for interdisciplinary units on a wide range of topics (e.g., home construction, animal husbandry, mining and the environment, and folk music and dance; Browning-Aiken 2005; Sandoval-Taylor 2005). The approach is attracting attention from teacher preparation programs with a concern for teaching in diverse communities (Buck and Sylvester 2005).

Small Schools

Communities have also started their own schools to respond to needs as they see them, usually through the initiative of a community-based organization.

El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, for example, was started in 1993 as a result of a collaboration between El Puente, a community human rights organization, and the New York City Board of Education. El Puente, located in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, “promotes leadership for peace and justice by engaging youth and adults in the arts, education, wellness, scientific research, and environmental action” (El Puente n.d., para. 1). The goal of El Puente Academy is not just to educate young people but also to help them see their relationship with and responsibility to the community that raises them. An example of what this looks like comes from a senior’s portfolio project: “The project focused on the Community Reinvestment Act, a law designed to





protect against redlining and ensure that banks give loans to the people who live in the communities that they service. The graduating class researched local banks' records and wrote a report on who was getting loans and who wasn't. They then handed this report to the community organizers in the CBO, who have been using it to direct their strategic planning" (Wehner 2001, para. 4).

Developing and applying math, English, science, and social studies skills to solving community problems is what distinguishes the curriculum at the Academy. By connecting learning to life in ways that empower students, the Academy integrates quality education, community development, and youth development. El Puente Academy was recognized in 2003 as one of New York City's Schools of Excellence.

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School is a unique private school model created by the Catholic order of priests commonly known as the Jesuits. Drawing on the Jesuits' long history of education work in Central and South America, the school brought the benefits of a quality education to a low-income immigrant community in Chicago. To fund the school the founders worked with a management consultant to create the highly innovative Corporate Internship Program, which was designed to mobilize city businesses.

Cristo Rey opened in 1996 in Chicago's Pilsen–Little Village community. The school offers a high-quality college preparatory program that includes a dual language Spanish/English curriculum. All students work five days a month in entry-level jobs in Chicago businesses or not-for-profit agencies to help defray their tuition costs. Each business partner pays the equivalent of one full-time job, which is then shared by four students. Initially an innovation to help low-income immigrant students afford a private college preparatory program, the effort has led to an enriching learning experience through which "students acquire desirable job experience and marketable skills, develop a network of business contacts, gain exposure to a wide variety of career opportunities, refine a strong work ethic, and increase their self-esteem" (Cristo Rey n.d., para. 2).

The business community has been equally enthusiastic about their young employees. Ninety-nine percent of the 2006 graduates were expected to go to college. Eighty-two percent of Cristo Rey alumni are either attending or have already graduated from college. While the school is selective and requires interviews with students and their parents, the typical student lives in the neighborhood, is from a low- to moderate-income immigrant family, is motivated to learn, employable, academically competent, and has basic Spanish proficiency (Kantrowitz and Springen 2007). Based on its impressive success in Chicago, the *Cristo Rey Network*, which now includes 19 schools, was formed to replicate the model in other low-income communities.

Other Community-Centered and Community-Driven Practices

Latino organizations around the country also offer specific programs or resources to support education reform efforts targeting Latinos. For example, there are several parent leadership training programs that help prepare parent leaders for the important advocacy and school decision-making roles that schools are inviting them to assume. At least three nationally recognized organizations sponsor such programs: the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), the National Council of La Raza, and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF).

While similar in aims, the parent programs of these organizations differ in approach and content. California-based *PIQE*, for example, uses the informal, dialogic techniques pioneered by Paulo Freire (1973) to engage parents in interpreting their lived experience, raising their consciousness, and mobilizing them to take informed action. Their workshops and coaching focus on what parents can do at home, the school, and the community to support their children's social, emotional, and academic learning, such as: maintaining a supportive home learning environment; communicating and collaborating with teachers, counselors, and principals; navigating the school system and accessing its resources; encouraging college attendance; and identifying and avoiding obstacles to school success. PIQE's demonstrated effects on the degree to which parents support their children's education has been measured by the frequency with which they communicate with their children's teachers, read to their children, praise or recognize their children for doing well in school, and review their children's homework (Golan 1997). The *National Council of La Raza* models its *Parents as Partners* program after PIQE.

MALDEF's Parent School Partnership (PSP) program "trains trainers" who lead sixteen-session parent workshops in their school community. This training equips parents with knowledge and tools for educational advocacy within their school and district. They learn about their rights as parents, how the school and district are structured and function, who the educational policy-makers are, how to ask questions, how to facilitate meetings and make presentations, how to engage the media, and how to be responsible leaders in the pursuit of better educational opportunities for their children (MALDEF 2002).

Finally, there is *El Puente Project* based in Indianapolis, Indiana (Rosario and Vargas 2004). Independent of the Puente programs described earlier, El Puente is a promising illustration of how small-scale initiatives at the local level can bring together higher education, community-based organizations, public schools, and philanthropic foundations to forge effective partnerships in communities experiencing the rapid influx of recent Latino immigrants. Conceived as a collaborative of the Center for Multicultural Education (CUME) at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), the Hispanic Education Center (HEC), a nonprofit community organization serving Latinos, and the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS), El Puente was designed to support high school students and their families with comprehensive services in four areas: youth leadership, academic preparation, parent and community involvement, and cultural and global awareness.

During El Puente's three-year demonstration phase, all students who reached their senior year while in the project graduated and most went on to pursue a college education. A number of graduates attending college remain connected to the project and are involved in civic engagement activities in the local Latino community, such as developing a project website (www.elpuenteproject.com) targeting Latino youth in Indiana, mentoring students in area schools, sponsoring summer youth workshops in photography and film, and lobbying for passage of the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act.



Conclusions

In accounting for the success of community-centered practices, there is much to be said for the ability of these models to forge alliances among school, family, and community in a common pursuit of student outcomes—what Clarence Stone and his associates (2001) call *civic capacity*. Families and communities, in partnership with schools, harness their human, cultural, and social capital to address the multiple barriers facing Latino youth as they attempt to access and make the best of educational opportunities.

But while essential to the success of community-centered practices, the building of civic capacity is not sufficient. Civic capacity, as the practices featured here demonstrate, must also draw on research-based principles—what we know about best practice generally—to structure and sustain the work of the alliances forged. Thus, by way of conclusion, we summarize below eleven principles that undergird community-centered models and might also explain why they appear to work for Latinos:

- 1) fostering a culture of authentic caring;
- 2) building on language, culture, and social capital;
- 3) building personal relationships and a sense of community;
- 4) expanding the narrative of individuality to explain achievement;
- 5) engendering a vision of excellence, possibility, and high expectations;
- 6) sharing responsibility and accountability;
- 7) creating and ensuring access to involvement opportunities;
- 8) focusing on prevention;
- 9) fitting programs to outcomes;
- 10) committing for the long term; and
- 11) securing needed support.

These principles do not stand alone; they intertwine and reinforce each other. They do not address one barrier or one challenge but several simultaneously. They take account of the individual and social characteristics of the learners. They address the structural and complex interrelationships among school, family, learning, and community building. And they acknowledge the social, economic, and political realities that exist for Latinos in the United States.

Fostering a Culture of Authentic Caring

Authentic caring commits individuals to do right by others in genuine and holistic ways. “As the logic of authentic caring dictates,” Angela Valenzuela (1999, 110) reminds us, “a complete apprehension of the ‘other’ means that the material, physical, psychological and spiritual needs of youth will guide the educational process.” Caring is the overarching framework that ought to guide all the other values and practices composing a quality education (Noddings 2005).

Building on Language, Culture, and Social Capital

Community-centered practices respect, value, and build on family and community assets—their language, culture, and social capital. In doing so, they acknowledge the value of these strengths to the formation of identity. Social, linguistic, and cultural capital are the materials individuals use to make their lives (Appiah 2005). To negate these is to negate a person’s identity. As Lucas points out, “Individuals cannot change their culture without losing their identity” (Tamara Lucas, as cited in Garcia 2001). We know that immigrant children who retain strong cultural and family identities benefit from their

families' values of hard work and educational achievement and perform better in school (Rubén G. Rumbault, as cited in Garcia 2001; see also López 2001). We also know that children acquire literacy skills in English more easily when they are first taught in their home language (National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics 2007).

Home and school cultures may not share the same norms and expectations. Concepts of *educación* and *respeto* in Latino cultures do not necessarily correspond to their English translations and may not mesh well with concepts of individualism, competition, and independence among Americans (Delgado-Gaitan 2004). But teachers, community organizers, and others who become immersed in and identify with the Latino community become 'cultural brokers' who can translate important concepts, such as the role and place of parents in education, across differences of value and meaning (Chrispeels and Rivera 2001; Delgado-Gaitan 2004). These and similar lessons about the relationship between culture and education ought to be applied at all levels of school decision-making.

Building Personal Relationships and a Sense of Community

Engaging others and building community is about connecting with persons on an emotional level as well as an intellectual one (Buck and Sylvester 2005). Such experiences are powerful and can be transforming (Fliegel 1993; Meier 1995, 2002). A Funds of Knowledge teacher expressed the matter this way:

Participating in this project has had a profound impact on my thinking about multicultural education, teaching and schools... I am committed to this work because of the unique personal relationships that are established one at a time as I get to know my students' families...you can know the academic standards inside out, and you can write the most creative lessons plans, but if positive, affirming, and mutually respectful relationships are not the norm in our classrooms, learning does not take place. Even academic knowledge must be distributed through social relations.

This stands in stark contrast to the current trend to assume that all teachers need to know is contained in test scores. These days, staff development has been narrowed to the study of test data on which pedagogical choices are to be made. Educational decisions are 'data driven.' But test data are only part of the picture and do not provide teachers with enough information to effectively instruct and engage their students. Coming to know their students intimately, as participating teachers in Funds of Knowledge project do, is the piece that is missing in education planning today (Amanti 2005, 139).

This teacher goes on to describe the increased investment and level of commitment that comes from personal relationships. Research on nurturing resilience also confirms that "it is the relationships that have the power to transform and effect change, not the specific programs or approaches by themselves" (Bonnie Benard, as cited in Green 2005).

Expanding the Narrative of Individuality to Explain Achievement

Educational achievement in America is typically regarded as an individual accomplishment. While there is some truth to this notion, we know individual traits account for only a small part of the story (Conley 2004; Lopez 2003; Rosario 2006a). For poor and minority families in particular, the problems of schooling are primarily structural in nature—inequitable funding, less



qualified personnel, biased curricula, and policies and practices that privilege white middle- and upper-income students (Valenzuela 1999; Lopez 2003). Community-centered practices acknowledge the realities of students' in-school and out-of-school lives and situate educational problems in their broader social and political context.

Engendering a Vision of Excellence, Possibility, and High Expectations

Parental aspirations and expectations are linked to student achievement (X. Fan and M. J. Chen, as cited in Boethel 2003), and Latino families have consistently been shown to value education and to have high educational aspirations for their children (Delgado-Gaitan 2004; López 2001). Community-centered practices draw on this knowledge to reinforce what Latino families already share and to mobilize students, parents, and community members around high standards that make a difference in achievement.



Sharing Responsibility and Accountability

For community-centered practices, the education of youth is a shared responsibility. There is a recognition that stakeholders must hold each other accountable, particularly in failing schools and neglected communities. Principles of collaboration, consensus building, and a “no-fault philosophy,” such as the one undergirding the School Development Program, encourage stakeholders to push problem-solving to solutions that incorporate broader perspectives and alter the educational landscape. Much of this practice is in keeping with what we know about the positive connections between shared decision-making and student achievement (Henderson and Mapp 2002).

Creating and Ensuring Access to Involvement Opportunities

In planning for family and community involvement, it is important that schools provide a range of opportunities, as Epstein (2001) suggests, and that they be flexible and creative in scheduling and situating extra-curricular events, providing translation, and accommodating other needs, such as transportation and childcare. Latinos are typically underrepresented in high-quality educational programs (Garcia 2001; National Task Force on Early Education for Hispanics 2007). Proponents of effective community-centered practices know that to give

Latinos entry into these programs, persistent communication and encouragement is essential. They also operate with the understanding that there is a research-based connection between access to quality programs and educational attainment (Cordero Guzmán 1997).

Focusing on Prevention

Many community-centered practices place priority on preventing school problems. Home visits, for instance, are used to establish positive relationships and engage parents as partners, not just to follow up on ‘problem students’. Parent workshops and training provide information to help families support children’s learning at home and take advantage of school and community resources. Students engage in community work or internships so they can start envisioning a future. Obstacles or challenges facing students and families are anticipated and addressed proactively. All these practices pave the way for what Garcia (2001) refers to as “access to success.”

Fitting Programs to Outcomes

Research shows that family and community involvement that focuses *directly* on student learning have a greater effect on achievement. Concentrated effort maximizes outcomes (Henderson and Mapp 2002). It is important, therefore, for schools to target the desired gains they would like to see and engage family and community in achieving them. The same holds true for access to post-secondary education. As the success of PIQE and Puente demonstrate, students are more likely to attend college or university if they and their parents *together* fully understand the advantages and expectations of higher education and the process for entry (Puente Project 2003; Parent Institute n.d.).

Committing for the Long Term

Effective community-centered practices are not short-term projects. These efforts are premised on the idea that consistent, continuous involvement yields more lasting results. Multiple studies have shown that longer and more intense participation of parents in their children’s education produces more positive results (Henderson and Mapp 2002). This principle also holds true for implementation of comprehensive school reform. On the average, it takes three to five years for reform models to demonstrate student gains (Aladjem and Borman 2006).

Securing Needed Support

To produce and provide access to quality education, resources undoubtedly matter (Kozol 2005, 1995, 1991). So as federal, state, and local governments continue to encourage the formation of school-family-community partnerships as a way of devolving their financial responsibility for public education (Franklin 2004), successful alliances must seek out and mobilize stakeholders with a vested interest and a willingness to commit time and resources to community-centered practices. Partnerships must leverage assets and recognize opportunities within their own institutions and community to sustain their efforts, such as businesses with entry-level jobs for bilingual/bicultural workers as in the case of Cristo Rey. They must reallocate funds, procure new resources, and lobby legislators to invent opportunities where there are none. But, most importantly, they must find and mobilize the power base they need.



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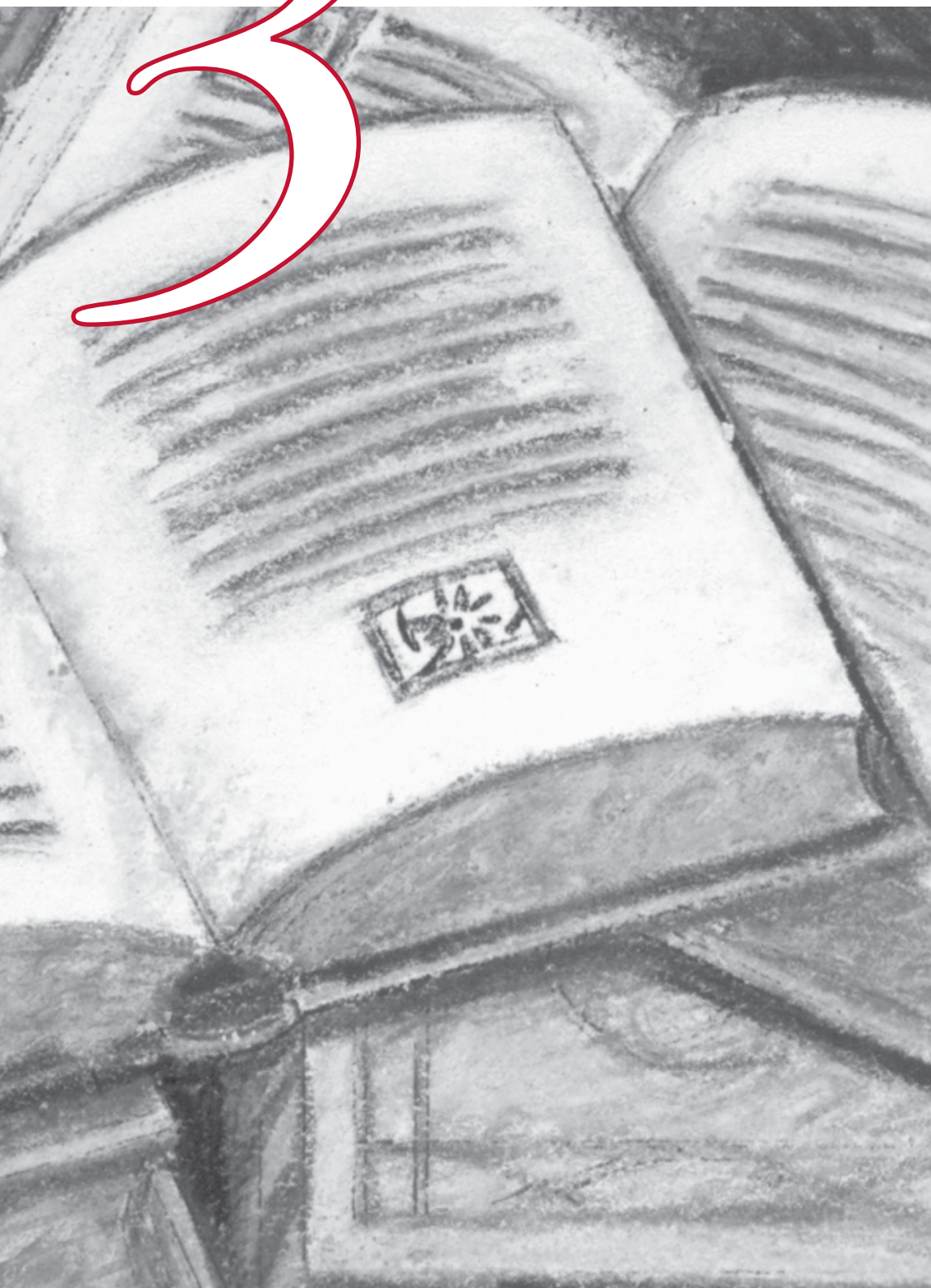
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Work Readiness, Skill Development, and Signaling Processes

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ABSTRACT

Schools' traditional emphasis on academics ignores society's broad needs, and it also places students from disadvantaged backgrounds at even greater disadvantage. While schools struggle to test academic skills through multiple-choice questions about math and reading, there is an increased awareness that youth need to acquire work-readiness skills that lead to advancement opportunities. This paper considers the general goals for work-readiness skills, examines how work-readiness skills are defined and how they are conceived by policy-makers, and evaluates what research says about their importance. After briefly reviewing instructional processes, it focuses on three signaling processes that have been neglected by researchers and practitioners but that can have a crucial impact: by test scores, by personal contacts, and by institutional contacts. Research suggests that while employers display skepticism toward tests, grades, and anonymous teacher recommendations, they are comfortable using outside information when it is conveyed through trusted social relationships. This paper outlines types of school-employer contacts and presents an analysis of how schools can create effective institutional contacts that communicate dependable evaluations of their students' work readiness. Schools have a great deal to gain from creating and maintaining institutional contacts and from signaling students' broader capabilities, including their work-readiness skills. Research supports the claim that co-op and internship experiences not only improve students' experiences in work places, they also contribute to improved school engagement. The paper concludes with an analysis of some of the distinctive benefits for Latino students of acquiring opportunities to learn norms of communicating at work, such as working with others and methods of conflict resolution. Schools can provide opportunities for obtaining these skills, and relationships between the school job placement staff and employers will broaden students' understanding of their job options and the educational requirements for these options.

3

Work Readiness, Skill Development, and Signaling Processes

Introduction

Work Readiness is an enormous topic, far too large to cover in a short essay. Consequently, it is necessary to make strategic decisions about how to address it. First, this paper presents under-recognized approaches. Second, it presents pragmatic suggestions—simple, easily implemented actions that could have large benefits. The task of signaling students' accomplishments is relatively straightforward, is likely to have powerful impact, and is largely neglected. Therefore, that is the emphasis in this report.

This paper begins by considering the general goals of schooling and the need for work-readiness skills, particularly for Latino youths. We then consider how work-readiness skills are defined, how they are conceived by policy-makers, and what research says about their importance. We then consider work-readiness programs. After briefly reviewing instructional processes, we focus on signaling processes that have been neglected by researchers and practitioners. We argue that signaling processes can have crucial impact. We describe three kinds of signaling: by test scores, by personal contacts, and by institutional contacts. We conclude that schools have a great deal to gain by creating institutional contacts to signal students' broader capabilities, including their work-readiness skills. We describe some of the elements in creating such institutional linkages. We also consider some of the distinctive benefits for Latino students.

The purpose of schools is to prepare young people to become full members of society. Although many necessary skills have traditionally been taught in families, families are increasingly hard-pressed to provide skill training, and the problem may be widespread. Some parents do not have time or knowledge about new job skills in new sectors of the labor market. Other parents hold low-wage, entry-level jobs, are not in the labor market, face great difficulties from poverty, or lack knowledge about the broader society because they are recent immigrants. Schools might be expected to take on the teaching of these skills; however, schools have been pressured away from such tasks. Some test-based reforms have narrowed schools' mission to academic skills only, and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has further narrowed that mission to merely passing basic skills tests in two academic subjects. Yet the larger goal of schooling—to prepare young people to become full members of society—must not be forgotten.

The challenge of accessing higher wage jobs with a future is particularly great for Latino youth. Labor market participation is fairly high among Latino men (about 88 percent of foreign-born Latinos employed and 86 percent of



US-born employed). These rates are slightly lower than those of non-Hispanic whites (92 percent) but substantially higher than those of blacks (74 percent; Duncan, Hotz, and Trejo 2006). However, the jobs Latinos hold are largely of low earnings and low skill demands. In addition, youth in the second and third generation continue to show serious disadvantages relative to non-Hispanic whites' attainment in education and in the labor market (Borjas 2006; Reed et al. 2005). Differences in academic skills and English language proficiency may partially explain this gap, but social and cultural barriers that limit pathways to higher paying skilled jobs also need to be considered. Schools can play an important role in overcoming these barriers.

If basic competency in answering multiple-choice questions about math and reading were schools' only purpose, this essay would not be needed. NCLB is struggling with those goals. However, society and the labor market need a much broader range of skills. Although acquiring basic skills in math and reading is useful, it is not sufficient for young people to become productive adults with satisfying careers. There is an increased awareness that youth need to acquire work-readiness skills that lead to advancement opportunities.

What Are Work-Readiness Skills?

'Work readiness' is a term for the basic competencies required for entry into the labor market. It refers to general competencies across many workplaces, not skills specific to certain jobs.

The report by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS 1991) identified multiple dimensions of work readiness. There are many different versions, but nearly all share certain features. One of the most prominent versions, the National Work Readiness Credential, defines 'work readiness' as the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are required for successful performance of entry-level work in the twenty-first-century workplace (as judged by front-line workers, supervisors, managers, and other workforce experts). The skills addressed in the standard include communication, interpersonal, problem-solving, and learning skills, as well as applied reading and math. The workplace responsibilities addressed include the following specific skills: acquire and use information to get the job done; use appropriate technology; work with others; solve problems; understand and use systems; demonstrate responsible behaviors at work; and learn new skills to meet new job challenges (www.workreadiness.com).

While some commissions use rhetoric that suggests that all students will need high-level skills, they are often addressing narrow segments of labor market needs. In fact, relatively few employers demand advanced academic skills for entry-level positions (Cappelli and Rogowsky 1993; Murnane and Levy 1996; Hill and Nixon 1984; Holzer 1995). Most jobs only require basic academic skills (at roughly tenth grade level), and the problem is that half of high school graduates lack tenth grade skills (Murnane and Levy 1996). In addition, employers are more concerned with noncognitive skills than with cognitive skills. Most notably, a survey of 4,000 private employers by the US Census Bureau (1994) and a more intensive local study by Mickelson and Walker (1997) find that employers place more weight on noncognitive behaviors than on cognitive skills. Researchers find that employers say they seek workers with a wide variety of noncognitive behaviors, ranging from basic attendance, cooperativeness, and good attitudes to social interaction, participation,

leadership, effort, and preparation (Baxter and Young 1982; Cappelli 1992; Cappelli and Rogowsky 1993; US Bureau of the Census 1994; Crohn 1983; Hazler and Latto 1987; Murnane and Levy 1996; SCANS 1991). Cappelli and Rogowsky (1993) suggest that noncognitive behaviors may be as important as cognitive skills in predicting workplace productivity.

In interviews with 51 small and mid-sized employers, Miller and Rosenbaum (1997) found that employers' reports indicate three types of noncognitive skills:

- 1) *Normative compliance*—attendance, dependability, positive attitude, avoiding rule infractions, and handling social conflict;
- 2) *General work procedures*—effort, persistence, problem solving, attention to quality, and preparing for next tasks; and
- 3) *Social skills*—communicating about work tasks with co-workers, leadership, and participating in activities beyond job tasks (maintaining operations, organizing work area, etc).

These employers are not expressing mere casual preferences. They are identifying work-readiness attributes that they have difficulty obtaining, the absence of which causes them serious production difficulties. Employers gave specific, highly credible stories of the costs they incur from poor work-readiness skills when supervisors, whose time is expensive, need to deal with discipline problems or have to use their time for teaching and checking on the basics of workplace behavior (Moss and Tilly 1996, 2001; Cappelli 1992; Olneck and Bills 1980). Employers' complaints include examples of young workers who harassed women and minorities, engaged in verbal or physical fights with peers or supervisors, and were careless with dangerous equipment (Rosenbaum 2001). These are serious problems that employers seek to avoid.

The work-readiness skills defined above are highly general skills that all members of society must acquire to be effective in the workplace. Even students who plan on attending college will need these skills as they study, as they enter the workforce in part-time jobs during college, and in their later careers.

Work-Readiness Programs

There are two elements of work-readiness programs: first, the *instructional processes*, which provide the right competencies; second, the *signaling processes*, which provide convincing evidence of these competencies to prospective employers. Schools usually focus only on the first, but the second is just as important.

Instructional Processes

Over the past 20 years educators have devised many kinds of programs to provide instruction in work-readiness skills. Many studies show that school-to-work programs often increase student school engagement (attendance, grades, retention, educational aspirations; Stull 2003, 17). Although few studies have examined work-readiness skills *per se*, these skills are likely to be associated with the indicators of student engagement, suggesting the possibility that school-to-work programs have benefits for work readiness. Moreover, while these programs help all kinds of students, they have been shown to have particularly strong and immediate benefits for the students most at risk of not completing high school and lower achieving and disadvantaged students (Rivera-Batiz 2003).



Career Academies

The career academy is one of the most important approaches to instructing work readiness. A great deal of research has focused on career academies, which have been shown to improve student engagement and school retention, although they do not raise test scores (Stern, Wu, Dayton, and Maul 2003). Studies of the National Academy Foundation's career academies find that fully implemented programs have strong benefits on high school engagement and achievement and on college and career plans. These studies also found that career academies create an atmosphere where students encourage each other to work hard and do well (Orr et al. 2007).

The most rigorous study of academies was Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation's random assignment study. The results indicate that career academies increase attendance and retention in high school, but there is no indication of improvement in terms of grades, credits earned, or reduced discipline problems (Kemple and Snipes 2000). However, this may be a byproduct of the greater 'holding power' of academies: By reducing the dropout rate among low-achieving students, academies may depress the observed achievements because the schools are able to hold onto low-achieving students who otherwise would have dropped out (Stern, Wu, Dayton, and Maul 2003).

Co-ops, Work-study, and Internships

Co-ops, work-study, and internships are workforce placements supervised by a school or other training agency (Stern and Stevens 1992). "Often a teacher-coordinator collaborates with the student's supervisor at the work site in writing a training plan for the student and evaluating the student's performance. Students receive school credit for their work experience. This is the traditional practice in cooperative vocational education" (Stern 1992, 8). While the vast majority of students holding jobs are in naturally occurring, paid, unsupervised jobs, supervised jobs tend to be designed to provide work-readiness skills, and the acquisition of skills tends to be carefully monitored. Students in co-op programs are more likely than students in unsupervised jobs to say that their jobs make use of what they have learned in school, that what they learn on the job is useful in school, that they get more opportunities to learn new things, and that they have more interest and motivation to do the job (Stone et al. 1990). Students in school-supervised work experience (co-ops, internships) are more likely to report agreement on the following items:

"My job gives me a chance to practice what I learned in school."

"What I've learned in school helps me do better on my job."

"My job provides information about things I'm studying in school."

"School makes me realize how important it is to learn to do things well on my job."

"My job has taught me the importance of getting a good education."

These items are striking because they indicate that the school-supervised work program not only improves performance on the job, it also is likely to improve performance in school. In effect, these experiences outside of school show students the importance of school, and in so doing they are likely to improve school performance. Some outstanding examples of such programs have served Latino students. Good examples of these programs can be seen in Latino-serving public schools in Washington DC (Ready 1991) and in the Cristo Rey model in Chicago.

If well-designed, these programs can have a big impact on the learning of work-readiness skills. Stephen Hamilton and Mary Agnes Hamilton (1992) have specified some of the conditions for making these programs effective as learning environments. They describe the ways that the teacher's role must include various aspects of coaching: demonstrating test performance, explaining how to perform a task, explaining why a task is performed, monitoring and critiquing students' attempts at the task, and modeling problem solving by thinking aloud and demonstrating from solving strategies (20).



Other similar programs including tech prep (Stull 2003) and school-based enterprises (Stern et al. 1995) have been studied, and research and case studies indicate that these programs have strong benefits for student engagement (Stern et al. 1994). It is also noteworthy that each of these types of programs provides experiences likely to contribute to good work-readiness skills. However, they do not impact labor market success without an effective way of signaling students' accomplishments (Stern and Stevens 1992). This suggests the importance of focusing on signaling processes.

Signaling processes

Signaling processes are often ignored, but they can have a crucial impact. The importance of signals is most dramatically indicated by programs that offer good training but actually hurt participants by the signals they convey. Several evaluation studies find that the graduates of well-designed job training programs have about the same earnings and employment rates as control groups who get no training (Basi and Ashenfelter 1986; Barnow 1987; Burghardt et al. 1992). Indeed, in some evaluations, although they acquire strong skills, graduates have lower earnings than control groups (Bloom et al. 1992; Cave and Doolittle 1991). A likely interpretation is that, while the job training programs may offer good training, they also convey *negative signals*. Since job-training programs for the unemployed only admit people with troubled work histories, they confer a stigma that reduces employers' willingness to hire. This poses a serious warning to all programs. Signals can have large impact on outcomes, even when the curriculum and work-based learning experiences are of high quality.

Moreover, developing the right signaling process may contribute to developing an appropriate and effective instructional process. As we shall show, schools with strong contacts with employers are more adept at discovering which specific skills and attributes employers want from their workers and more effectively communicate that information to their students. In other words, social contacts with employers enable teachers to gain authoritative



knowledge of the workplace, which in turn enhances both the programming and reputation of the school. There are two major ways for schools to create signals of work readiness: test scores and social contacts. Each has certain advantages and disadvantages. As we note below, although testing is simple and impressive tests have been developed, their usefulness is currently unproven and some evidence suggests that employers may be reluctant to give credence to test scores. Consequently, after reviewing this approach, we turn to the social contacts approach and two versions of social contacts.

Test Scores

The report by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS 1991) not only identified multiple dimensions of work readiness, it also urged the development of ways of testing these skills. There have been many efforts to develop tests of work-readiness skills, some of which are expensive and time-consuming, requiring behavioral performances rated by observers. Some of the best procedures involve certification of work competencies on performance tests. Such tests are done in certain occupations (Berryman 1992). Because performance tests require complex conditions, equipment, materials, and professional judgments, they are very expensive to administer to large numbers of students and also present difficulties in obtaining inter-rater reliability.

Paper and pencil tests and computer-administered tests are less expensive, but they often have difficulties in capturing the right dimensions, such as the social skills and work habits that are crucial aspects of work readiness. One of the best tests of this type is Work Keys, developed by ACT. Work Keys measures both foundational skills and personal or 'soft' skills.

The foundational skills exams measure the applied job skills needed for job-specific training in the areas of communication, problem solving, and interpersonal skills. The foundational skill exams include:

Applied Mathematics—applying mathematical reasoning to work-related problems;

Applied Technology—understanding technical principles as they apply to the workplace;

Business Writing—composing clear, well-developed messages relating to on-the-job situations;

Listening—being able to listen to and understand work-related messages;

Locating Information—using information from such materials as diagrams, floor plans, tables, forms, graphs, and charts;

Observation—paying attention to details in workplace instructions and demonstrations;

Reading for Information—comprehending work-related reading materials, from memos and bulletins to policy manuals and governmental regulations;

Teamwork—choosing behavior that furthers workplace relationships and accomplishes work tasks; and

Writing—creating effective written work-related messages and summaries.

The personal skills exams are designed to predict job behavior. The personal skill exams include:

Performance—a person's tendency toward unsafe work behaviors and attitudes toward work;

Talent—a person's dependability, assertiveness, and emotional stability; and

Fit—how a person's interests and values correspond to a chosen career.

While a great deal of careful work went into creating Work Keys and the test seems to have great promise, it is uncertain whether employers will use and value these (or any) test scores. In fact, research suggests that employers consciously choose not to use such information. The Census Bureau survey of 4,000 employers found that employers consider grades, tests, and teachers' recommendations as the *least* important factors when hiring (US Bureau of the Census 1994), and employers' lack of interest is further indicated in the fact that they do not even request high school transcripts. A national survey of 1,900 personnel officers found that many employers consider grades important for hiring *college* graduates, but few considered grades important for hiring high school graduates (Crain 1984). A strong personal impression in an interview was rated "very important" by 76 percent of personnel officers, while grades and tests were so rated by only 18 percent and 12 percent, respectively. In a study that pre-dates EEO rules, Diamond's (1970) survey of employers in ten major entry or near-entry occupations in New York and St. Louis also found that less than half used tests even for the most demanding jobs and the main hiring criteria for these jobs were impressions in an interview. In his study of hiring practices, David Bills found that none of the employers he interviewed was concerned with grades or tests (Bills 1988; personal communication, May 27, 1988).

While it is possible that employers might value the Work Keys test more than academic skills tests and report that simulations or practical tasks (welding, mechanics, typing tests) have credibility, they report a general skepticism about paper and pencil tests (Rosenbaum 2001). Research clearly indicates that employers do not use applicants' test scores, that this is a deliberate choice, and that they choose instead to rely on their impressions in interviews. Given employers' stated needs for academic skills and work habits, these findings are surprising but repeatedly duplicated.

Besides their own skepticism about tests, employers also are concerned that tests are cumbersome to administer under equal opportunity guidelines, mentioning the difficulty in validating tests for their jobs (Rosenbaum 2001). Even if employers adopt Work Keys, equal-opportunity guidelines require that they demonstrate that scores are relevant to their specific job tasks. This is not a simple matter, and small firms, which employ high proportions of youth, rarely have the research capacity for such tests.

While we believe Work Keys has great potential, the jury is still out as to whether it will be adopted by many employers, particularly small firms. As a practical matter, schools may want to experiment with Work Keys, and it may help schools monitor whether students are improving in work readiness, but schools should not count on employers' giving credence to the Work Keys test scores and making hiring decisions based on these scores.

School-Employer Contacts: The Need for School Contacts

People often assume that customary indicators of achievement are recognized by employers and have an impact on employment and earnings. However, that is not necessarily the case. Recent graduates with higher achievement do not get better jobs and pay right after high school (Griffin, Kalleberg, et al. 1981; Gamoran 1994), even though they do get better jobs and better pay 8–10 years later (Murnane, Willett, and Levy 1995; Miller 1998). Although high-achieving high school graduates' value is not recognized immediately, after they have been in the labor market a few years, employers slowly recognize their value.



In response to these findings, a new emphasis has been placed on social capital and contacts. Research suggests that social capital might allow employers to recognize the value of these individuals (Lin, Vaughn, et al. 1995; Marsden and Hurlbert 1988; Boxman, De Graaf, et al. 1991). Framed by Granovetter's (1973) findings of the importance of weak personal ties in job search, much of this research has focused on the use of personal contacts (e.g., Wegener 1991).

If mistrust is the primary barrier to employers' use of information, then social contacts may be part of the solution. Although employers mistrust tests, grades, and anonymous teacher recommendations, they are comfortable using outside information when it is conveyed through trusted social relationships. Employers trust those to whom they are connected, and there are some relationships in which both sender and receiver have enough trust to pass on and use information.

This dynamic is common in supplier relationships. Instead of conducting expensive tests on the quality of raw materials that they purchase, employers often purchase materials through trusted long-term relationships from suppliers whom they trust because these suppliers have a vested interest in continuing to satisfy them. Similarly, given the difficulties of testing the workforce readiness of young job applicants, hiring through trusted long-term relationships with schools could reassure employers that the school will make efforts to be a 'trusted supplier' of quality employees.

While it is difficult for an employer to assess job applicants' work readiness in a short employment interview, the work-readiness skills that employers seek are basic social competencies that teachers can assess from many hours of classroom observations. As noted, the three types of noncognitive skills that employers seek are: 1) normative compliance, 2) general work procedures, and 3) social skills (Miller and Rosenbaum 1997). Teachers observe student behaviors relevant to these attributes every day, and they are likely to have the same standards as a workplace supervisor in evaluating a student's attendance, dependability, effort, persistence, or communication skills. Indeed, research confirms that evaluations of these behaviors in high school strongly predict the earnings of high school graduates ten years after they graduate from high school (Rosenbaum 2001). If employers realized this, they could obtain a quick and easy evaluation of job applicants. The main problem is whether employers feel they can trust the evaluations they get from schools. That level of trust may be influenced by the relationship between employers and schools.

We consider two types of school-employer contacts: personal contacts between teachers and employers and institutional contacts between schools and employers.

Personal Contacts between Teachers and Employers

Rosenbaum (2001) discovered that many vocational high school teachers have relationships with employers, which they use to help students get jobs. Vocational teachers with industry experience understand job requirements, and they already have trusted relationships with employers. This allows them to a) access more information about job openings than students' parents and friends could, b) provide job leads in relevant fields and connections to influential employers outside of students' own contacts, and c) vouch for students and provide information about hard-to-assess traits (e.g., perseverance, quality of work). Even for students who have below-average academic skills, teachers can see other personal attributes that can be strong assets in the workplace.

Indeed, this school-employment model is promising. Analyses of national data find that there are large long-term earnings benefits for those who use school assistance compared to those who found jobs on their own (Rosenbaum 2001). According to the research, school placement led graduates to get jobs with better advancement opportunities. Moreover, these contacts are not biased: female and black students are somewhat more likely to get their first job through school help than are white males.

Moreover, vocational teachers' relationships with employers give them additional authority in the classroom, and they give students powerful incentives as well. Ordinarily, many students are complacent about turning in 'passable' work. Offered a chance to improve their work so they can improve their grade, students often reject the offer, saying "passing is good enough." In contrast, these vocational teachers tell students that 'passing' is not good enough for them to recommend the student to employers, and when students hear that, they see a powerful incentive for doing high-quality work. In other words, the trusted relationship with employers provides a strong incentive for students to develop work-readiness skills that are demanded in workplaces. These teachers make work-readiness skills the central curriculum in their courses, and the primary criterion for job recommendations, which in turn create powerful incentives for students to acquire work-readiness skills.

However, this model has three problems. First, it adds new tasks to already overburdened teachers. Making relationships with employers takes time. Second, it requires that teachers possess employer contacts. The vocational teachers had the advantage of already knowing some employers. Academic teachers would have greater difficulty with this. Many teachers do not have such contacts, and even if they do, they may not have time to use them. Third, even when these contacts exist and are used, they often serve only a few students. In the 1980s fewer than 5 percent of all US high schools placed 25 percent or more of their work-bound students (cf. High School and Beyond survey, Rosenbaum 2001). The situation may be worse today with the decline of vocational programs and pressures from NCLB. If schools are going to have such relationships with employers, these relationships are likely to require an additional staff person.

Institutional Contacts between Schools and Employers

Another approach is to provide institutional contacts between schools and employers, and provide a separate staff person to create contacts and assist student placements. In Germany and Japan, schools' institutional contacts help youths gain access to good jobs (Brinton 1993; Hamilton 1990; Osterman 1988; Rosenbaum and Kariya 1989).

While institutional contacts between schools and employers are not common in the United States, we discovered an interesting version of such contacts in private two-year colleges. We think this example could be implemented in other schools, particularly in high schools that are willing to innovate.

Like high schools, two-year colleges (both public and private) have difficulty getting recognition from employers. As the lowest tier of higher education, they enroll many low-achieving students. Both public and private two-year colleges offer occupational programs that are concerned with developing work-readiness skills, and they engage in many similar activities. However, we discovered that private two-year colleges conduct these activities in a very different way from their public counterparts, and they create effective institutional contacts



that communicate dependable evaluations of their graduates' work readiness. Comparing the way public and private two-year colleges handle the same tasks provides valuable lessons about how to make these institutional contacts effective. Although this model is derived from two-year colleges, the actions we report could also be performed by high schools.

For colleges to have effective relationships with employers, employers must trust colleges to provide dependable evaluations. Unlike our sample of public two-year colleges (commonly known as community colleges), where staff devote little time to developing relationships with employers, private two-year college staff engage in many actions to build trusted institutional relationships with employers. Although both types of colleges provide the same general types of activities (e.g., employer advisory boards, career services, job placement), they approach each of these activities in very different ways.

Advisory Boards

While community colleges in our sample have infrequent, short advisory meetings and little time is spent preparing for them, all staff at our sample of private two-year colleges reported an interest in exchanging information and in convincing employers that their programs serve employers' specific needs. They stated that they want their advisory boards to facilitate a systematic flow of information *from* employers about their hiring needs and *to* employers regarding the qualities that their programs' graduates possess to meet employers' needs. They solicit employers' reactions to the ways that their prior graduates have met employers' needs and advanced over time. This is a good way to monitor how well the school teaches work readiness—how their graduates actually do in workplaces. They also use employer advisory committees to learn what these employers expect from job candidates and to convince employers that the school strives to meet their needs and values their relationship.

Career Services

While our community colleges' career services offices conduct optional workshops to inform students how to create effective résumés, conduct job searches, and develop self-presentation skills, they do not give specific information about what skills specific employers value, they serve less than 20 percent of the students, and services are student-initiated.

In contrast, at the private two-year colleges, job placement is considered a central function of career services, and it is mandatory (except by special petition). Staff tell students what local employers in their field want to see on a résumé, which of their courses and skills meet the employers' needs, and how to present these skills and courses on a résumé and in interviews. This process helps students to see their distinctive strengths and how to present them.

Job Placement

While community colleges devote little effort to job placement, the private two-year colleges put a great deal of energy into it. Job placement staff initiate contacts, create a responsive procedure, provide information and applicants who are appropriate to particular employers, and develop trusted personal relationships with recruiters.

What is distinctive across these activities is the way career services form trusted relationships with employers and use those relationships to gain information about what employers want, how they respond to the schools' students and

graduates, and what they can do to better prepare their students. At the same time, the staff give personal attention to every student, helping them see their distinctive strengths (and weaknesses) so they can better prepare and present themselves. In essence, career services are important parts of the educational process at these private schools. Moreover, career services staff meet with teachers, and in the process they learn more about the students from the teachers and they help the teachers know what work-readiness skills employers seek.

Linking High School Education to College

Increases in labor market skill demands have raised students' educational expectations. The vast increase in college opportunities provided by community colleges has made attainment of these expectations possible. However, while over 80 percent of high school graduates enter college (in the eight years after graduation), fewer than half obtain any degree (associate's degree or higher), and for those who enter community colleges, degree completion is even more rare. Indeed, the eight-year degree completion rates for whites in community colleges is 44 percent. For Hispanics and blacks it is less than 33 percent (Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, and Person 2006).

While academic shortcomings are part of the problem, even students with strong academic skills have great difficulties completing degrees (*ibid.*). The problem stems in part from student difficulties with work-readiness skills, some of the same topics tested by Work Keys: applied technology, listening, locating information, reading for information, writing, dependability, and organized work activity. Students who acquire these work-readiness skills in high school will not only be able to hold jobs during college, they will also do better at college itself.

As noted, co-op and internship experiences not only improve students' experiences in work places, they also contribute to improved school engagement. Students gain an understanding of why school is important, and they become more engaged in school effort. Recent research has shown that students who seek connections between their schooling and work devote greater commitment to school and are less likely to drop out (*ibid.*). Work-readiness programs can show students the importance of further education and also provide them with the skills to handle college demands.

Distinctive Relevance for Latino Students

Schools' traditional emphasis on academic skills ignores society's broad needs, and it also places students from disadvantaged backgrounds at even greater disadvantage. The exclusive emphasis on academic skills, particularly test-taking skills, conveys an implicit message that students are inferior if they have difficulties with the test-taking format because of any limitations in English proficiency or even discomfort with English. As our review indicates, employers are much more concerned about other attributes, but public schools' narrow focus on test taking gives no recognition of students' other capabilities.

Schools that recognize work-readiness skills can provide acknowledgment of students' other capabilities. Even students with limited English proficiency can have strong work-readiness skills and they can benefit from work-readiness programs and job placement staff. Immigrant children and children of immigrant parents may struggle with academic courses and with English-language skills, but they may have an easier time developing work-readiness



skills. Parents who do not have a lot of education may not teach academic skills at home, but they teach many other skills. Some Latino children may learn teamwork, listening, communicating, and various performance and dependability traits in their family and their neighborhoods. Work-readiness skills provide alternative dimensions in which students can show competencies they already have or competencies they can develop more easily than academic skills that depend on English-language fluency.

The ways work-readiness skills are signaled may also be important for these students. We suspect that students with limitations in English-language proficiency may have difficulty demonstrating work-readiness competencies on tests like Work Keys, which require English proficiency. Many of these competencies do not necessarily presume English-language skills, but the tests often do. Although the above are speculations, they suggest the need to validate Work Keys on special populations, including students with limited English proficiency.

However, while Latino students may have some real disadvantages in this area, they may be easily remedied. Some work-readiness skills, though simple to learn, require exposure to the ‘office and professional workplace culture’ that disadvantaged children do not have. Children from Latino and other ethnic backgrounds may have difficulty realizing what is demanded by American workplaces, particularly offices and professional workplaces. Many students are eager to meet societal requirements but lack knowledgeable role models who hold jobs in offices and professional workplaces. It is not difficult to learn norms of communicating at work and working with others and how to resolve conflicts and solve work task problems, but children do not necessarily learn these. School can provide opportunities for learning them.

The process of signaling students’ work-readiness skills presents additional challenges for Latino youth. Many Latino youth live in culturally cohesive communities that are rich in ‘social capital’—social contacts that provide access to information and opportunities. However, these social contacts may not provide access to information about some of the work-readiness skills that are demanded by colleges or office and professional workplaces. In addition, people in their communities may be aware of students’ competencies in these areas, but they may not know employers, so they cannot provide helpful recommendations.



In contrast, school-employer contacts are likely to provide students with better information about workplace demands and to provide employers with more trusted signals of students’ work-readiness skills. Many teachers are able to separate these work-readiness capabilities from students’ English-language limitations.

Teachers can see students' efforts, so they become an important source for developing and signaling these capabilities. In turn, school placement staff could use teachers' evaluations and communicate them effectively to employers.

Prior studies of ethnic enclaves (for example, Bailey and Waldinger 1991; Portes and Manning 1986; Sanders and Nee 1987; Waters and Eschbach 1995) have emphasized both the benefits and drawbacks of such insular networks to members of an ethnic community. While these networks may provide information and reduce the risks of entry into unfamiliar territory for newcomers, they may also provide faulty information, they may be socially isolating, and they may restrict students' opportunities for success in the new environment (Sanders and Nee 1987).



More specifically, we may worry that while ethnic connections may help students find jobs, they may only provide access to certain kinds of jobs. Such connections might make it more difficult for students to see the need for school achievement, if the only jobs they see do not require school achievement. Such connections might also make it difficult for students to see the need for work-readiness skills related to office and professional workplaces if their connections do not entail jobs in such workplaces. For instance, if students only know people who have unskilled jobs, they may learn important work-readiness skills related to persistence and quality but not learn complex problem-solving and communication skills. In contrast, school job placement staff can provide contacts to office and professional workplaces, which will broaden students' understanding of their options and the requirements for these options.

There is much talk about social-capital deficiencies for disadvantaged minorities; however, often this discussion only leads to suggestions for new kinds of instruction. Our analysis suggests that the solution to social-capital deficiencies requires a social-capital approach that provides better information and advice. School staff who provide contacts to office and professional workplaces can broaden students' understanding of the work-readiness skills they must develop to fit into these occupations.

Conclusion

Advocates argue that private schools are more innovative and willing to break traditional habits to accomplish important goals. We have summarized some supportive evidence: Private two-year colleges are much more innovative in creating employer linkages than public colleges. Although some public college staff consider the idea of creating stronger linkages, they reject it because they are not sure it is consistent with what a school is supposed to do.



Such traditional conceptions prevent innovation and may interfere with goal accomplishment. It is significant that we only saw systematic institutional contacts in private colleges, where administrators believe that these contacts, though unorthodox, help them achieve their goals of motivating previously low-achieving students to learn and assisting students in completing degrees and getting good jobs. It is also perhaps significant that the informal personal contacts of vocational teachers in public high schools largely occurred below the radar screen. Teachers reported that they performed these actions out of their commitment to their own students, but they did not broadcast their activities despite the great good they did for individuals. In other words, these practices offer great opportunities for accomplishing school goals, and private schools are the ones that implement such innovations.

We have identified other ways to assess work readiness, but it is not clear that they would be accepted and understood by employers or by students. Work Keys seems very promising, but given employers' skepticism about other tests (some of which are well validated over many years), we suspect that employers will be slow to adopt Work Keys, and employers will not respond if schools provide Work Keys scores to attest to the work readiness of their graduates. Indeed, a school placement staff person may be necessary to persuade employers to use Work Keys, so the test may not remove the need for such staff persons.

We have shown two examples of linkage mechanisms: teachers' personal contacts and schools' institutional contacts. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Each is applicable to private secondary schools. While we discovered teachers' personal contacts in vocational programs in public high schools, academic teachers could also use such contacts. The school would have to help in the formation of the contacts, but academic teachers can evaluate many of the work-readiness skills that employers care about—showing up on time, meeting deadlines, quality of work, persistence, problem-solving, and so on.

In addition, high schools could easily emulate the procedures we discovered in private two-year colleges. It would entail some additional costs, but it could be done with only one additional staff person, and it would have large payoffs. These procedures assist students seeking part-time jobs during the school year, jobs over the summer, and jobs in the year after graduation (including jobs during college). They communicate students' work-readiness skills to employers, and they communicate employers' work-readiness needs to teachers and students. In the process, they facilitate the work-entry process, and they convey authority to teachers' evaluations and convey strong incentives for students to show teachers that they can attain the work-readiness skills that employers reward. Besides rating students on academic skills, teachers could also rate students on work-readiness skills, and these ratings could influence students' chances of getting part-time jobs, summer jobs, and jobs after graduation. For students who have difficulty seeing the relevance of the academic skills required of them or who have difficulty seeing reasons to develop work-readiness skills, this process can be especially effective in providing strong incentives and granting teachers authority.

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