HACER

Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research

December 2012

CLAC

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES: THE EDUCATION OF LATINOS IN MINNESOTA

REPORT to the CHICANO LATINO AFFAIRS COUNCIL

MINNESOTA Humanities Center

Prepared by:
Allison Shurilla, Colleen Ebinger, Gabriella Anais Deal-Marquez, and Rodolfo Gutierrez
Submitted To Hector Garcia
Executive Director, Chicano Latino Affairs Council

About Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER):

HACER's mission is to provide the Minnesota Latino community the ability to create and control information about itself in order to affect critical institutional decision-making and public policy.
General support for HACER is provided by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) and Minnesota-based philanthropic organizations.
Executive Director: Rodolfo Gutierrez

HACER
270 Appleby Hall,
128 Pleasant St. SE
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
(612) 624-3326
www.hacer-mn.org

This project was possible thanks to the funding from The Minnesota Humanities Center and Chicano Latino Affairs Council. The content of this report is solely the responsibility of HACER and does not necessarily represent the views of the Minnesota Humanities Center or CLAC.

Suggested reference to this report is:

Shurilla, A., Deal-Marquez, G., Ebinger, C., Gutierrez, R. (2012, September) *Opportunities and Challenges: The Education of Latinos in Minnesota.*

We are grateful to all who contributed to the making of this report:
Thank you to all of those who offered support and expertise for this project: the Education Committee from CLAC, Hector Garcia, Silvia Alvarez, all those who were interviewed. Special thanks to HACER and CLAC staff and volunteers

HACER Staff and Consultants:
Allison Shurilla, MPP
Rodolfo Gutierrez, PhD (Executive Director)
Nahila Ahsan
Gabriella Deal-Marquez
Colleen Ebinger, Impact Strategies Group
Silvia Alvarez, PhD, University of Minnesota

HACER and CLAC interns, volunteers and staff: Michelle Strafelda, Paul Buchel, Killa Martinez, Melissa Diaz, and Sarah Goodspeed

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of research into factors that contribute to successful educational outcomes for Latino students in Minnesota high schools. The Chicano-Latino Affairs Council (CLAC) and the Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC) partnered with Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER) as part of a larger initiative to more successfully leverage the potential of Minnesota's Latino students to contribute to the state's overall economy and wellbeing.[1] This initiative is based on data showing that Minnesota's rapidly growing Latino population is poised to support the state's future success in a globalized economy if we tap into the intercultural knowledge and language skills that have been historically underutilized. Central to this initiative is the goal of improving high school graduation rates, lowering dropout rates, and expanding college enrollment of Latino youth, thereby allowing them to develop the skills required in today's workforce.

This research focused on high schools across Minnesota whose programs have produced above-average success rates for Latino students and in which educational disparities among students have been narrowed. The team reviewed scholarly research and demographic data, and examined the factors that contribute to lower educational attainment for Latino students comparing them to other programs throughout the country that have been correlated with high levels of success for Latino students, as well as scholarly literature related to this topic. Specific high schools chosen as research sites were selected based on a) total Latino student population, b) the desire to have a diverse set of geographies represented (rural/suburban/urban), c) indicators of success (including graduation rates and student achievement data), and d) additional relevant factors such as exemplary enrichment programs.

The research project included the following activities:

- Literature Review: Review of quantitative data, best practices, and existing research on the achievement gap and successful educational programs, schools, and program elements.
- Examination of 6 successful[2] secondary schools and education programs throughout Minnesota. This research included:
    - Review of educational data in each of the schools;
    - Background research on school programs and community-level socioeconomic factors;
    - Individual interviews with program leaders, staff, and successful students from these schools.

[1] HACER contracted with Impact Strategies group throughout the research process.

[2] Program sites were selected based on graduation rates and state test scores (specifically, the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment- MCA II) from recent years; selection is based on current scores, previous achievement, and growth. All schools also have a significant number of Latino students. By examining the practices used by these schools and programs, we have drawn conclusions about possible practices that may contribute to the narrowing of the gap. It should be noted, however, that existing data is insufficient to state conclusively that any changes were caused by these programs or practices.

Through our review of previous research and our own conversations with school staff and students, the following themes emerged as the main strategies schools and educational programs have found to be successful with Latino students:

1. Building strong relationships between staff and students and providing individual attention to each student;
2. Fostering motivation in students by helping them identify and achieve their own goals, and offering encouragement;
3. Providing exposure to career and higher education opportunities;
4. Creating an environment of high expectations, academic rigor, and promoting upper level academic opportunities;
5. Ensuring a welcoming and respectful school environment;
6. Recognizing and placing value on students' cultural identities and needs;
7. Encouraging family involvement by building mutually respectful relationships and addressing the needs of parents and families;
8. Utilizing partnerships, collaboration, and community involvement to engage students.

These themes carry with them a series of implications for public policy changes that have the potential to improve educational opportunities for Latino students. Importantly, each is widely understood to contribute to positive outcomes for **all** students. What makes their application distinctive is that, in the selected schools, they are applied equitably to all students, inclusive of Latinos. This does not appear to be the norm in most schools.

These themes have policy implications that fall into three key areas: policy and legislature, school districts and schools, and teacher and staff training.

- Policy and legislature: Rather than focusing narrowly on broad academic accountability measures and procedures that have little meaning to schools, state level policies should encourage individual and intensive support for students. This includes supporting, encouraging, and funding programs that utilize these strategies and the recognition that education takes place beyond the classroom in students' families, cultures, and communities.
- School districts and schools: Schools must commit to implementing programs to address student needs in a comprehensive way that focuses not only on quality academic support, but also recognizes diverse student needs.
- Teacher & Staff Training: Teacher education should not only focus on pedagogical strategies, but should include intensive training in practices that foster culturally meaningful connections with students. This includes Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD programs, as well as continuous professional development once they are in working with youth.[3]

Some argue that closing the state's persistent achievement gap is only possible by decreasing the achievement of the overall population or at the expense of the highest achieving students. Our

[3] A full list of policy recommendations is available in Table 3 and Appendix 2.

research contradicts these assertions: greater gains for traditionally underachieving populations are in fact matched by improvements for **all** students. The importance of this finding should be emphasized, as it carries important implications for all Minnesotans. The success of Latino students is not only achievable; it is essential to the success of Minnesota's culture and economy in an increasingly globalized world.

Introduction

We are in the midst of an educational crisis in Minnesota: by virtually every measure, Minnesota has one of the highest educational achievement gaps by ethnicity in the country (Weber, 2012). For Latino students, this means a 33 percentage point difference in high school graduation rates compared to Whites; only half are graduating from in four years. The U.S. Department of Education reported that the 2010-11 gap is the worst among all states and that Minnesota had the lowest Latino high school graduation rate in the country. While this gap matters for equity and moral reasons, it also important to the economic competitiveness of the state for two main reasons:

First, Minnesota is an aging state. Between now and 2035, the largest population growth in Minnesota is projected to be in the 65+ age bracket. In that period, the number of people over 65 is expected to double from 2005, while the under 65 bracket is expected to grow by only 10 percent (State Demographic Center, 2012). An increasing percentage of these younger workers are ethnic minorities, with Latinos growing at a faster rate in Minnesota than all other demographic groups. In order to support retirees and to maintain Minnesota's high quality of life, Minnesota will need the younger generation to be highly productive workers – which means they must also be well-educated.

Second, increasing globalization necessitates a multilingual, multicultural work force. All states are looking beyond the U.S. border for increased trade opportunities, and Minnesota is no exception. The U.S. has individual or multi-lateral free trade agreements with the majority of Spanish-speaking countries in the western hemisphere. As a key challenge identified in navigating these opportunities is a lack of cultural understanding and, to a lesser degree, fluency in Spanish, when embarking on business dealings with foreign companies. Further underscoring the value of biculturalism, corporate executives at a recent Minnesota business roundtable on immigration noted their reliance on the foreign-born for their "divergent and complementary cultures" that support outside-the-box thinking and innovation (Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce, 2012). Students that speak multiple languages, move frequently between cultures, and have personal relationships with citizens of other countries are increasingly common in Minnesota and have the potential to greatly enrich the state if armed with a high-quality education. Too many of these very students are currently passed over academically, and our educational system has proven ill-equipped to meet the changing needs of the state's student population.

It does not have to be this way. Leaders from business, government, nonprofits and philanthropy have become increasingly committed to ending these disparities in order to ensure that the economic edge and high quality of life that the state has historically enjoyed will endure for the coming generations. This report offers a roadmap to help us get there.

Background, Purpose, and Focus

This project originated as a collaboration between the Chicano Latino Affairs Council (CLAC) and the Minnesota Humanities Center to address the disparities in educational attainment between Latino and majority students, to address the economic and social needs of the state, and to enrich the cultural legacy of the state of Minnesota. The project is directed by the Chicano Latino Affairs Council (CLAC) in partnership with the Minnesota Humanities Center, and is funded by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund that was created by a vote of the people of Minnesota on November 2008. Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER) has been contracted to conduct research on educational programs in Minnesota where gaps in graduation rates between Latino and majority students have narrowed in order to identify best practices. Impact Strategies Group is a partner with HACER on this project.

The Latino population is the fastest growing and largest minority population in the country; it is the second largest minority group in Minnesota. A skilled and workforce-ready Latino community is increasingly essential to the well-being of our state. Not only do Latinos bring cultural and linguistic knowledge that is essential in an increasingly globalized world, the group's lower median age compared to the majority population can help the state address projected workforce shortfalls in critical occupations as well as the escalating costs of education, health care, and other programs.

The main goal of CLAC's overall education initiative, which guides this project, is to create a more successful learning environment for Latino students. It seeks to help narrow the achievement gap between Latino and majority population students, dismantle barriers that hinder educational attainment for Latino students, improve Latino high school graduation rates, and work towards overcoming barriers that impede higher educational attainment by Latino students. Minnesota has much to gain by identifying and implementing successful approaches that could be incorporated system-wide.

This project focuses on the cultural and linguistic assets of the larger Latino community that contribute to the success of Latino students, and explores the ways in which educational programs have harnessed those assets to serve their students. It seeks to answer the questions, "How are schools and programs designing activities in a way that leverages existing assets of the Latino community? What impact does this cultural and linguistic inclusion have on the success of Latino students?"

The Chicano Latino Affairs Council states that, "the central and core value is [that] culture and language matter, that culture and language [are] an asset and not a liability," and outlines three main objectives for the project:

1. Identify transferable principles from successful schools and projects.
2. Make policy recommendations that affirm those principles and seek to fund and support Minnesota programs that incorporate them.
3. Publicize findings and challenge policy makers, educational leaders, classroom teachers, and parents to implement strategies that benefit their students and communities.

Data Collection

This project focuses on secondary education and the achievement gap as defined by the disparities in graduation rates between Latino and White students. As previous research clearly shows, high school achievement rests in large part on high-quality early childhood and elementary education. Additionally, success in high school means little if students do not see a path toward accessing higher education – including technical and vocational training, community colleges, and four-year institutions. Each educational level is interconnected with the others. For this report, we have focused our research on secondary education institutions (high schools), occasionally complementing our investigation with the inclusion of middle school programs as well.

A total of 18 interviews were conducted at 6 program sites throughout Minnesota and in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area (detailed profiles of the schools can be found in Appendix 1).[4] Three sites are located in rural communities in southern or southwestern Minnesota (Sleepy Eye, Willmar and Worthington). All three are medium-sized cities that serve as central economic and social hubs for their region. Due to the central location, these schools are larger and significantly more diverse than other schools in the area. One school is located in a city (Northfield) just outside of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area and is home to two liberal arts universities and a local community college. Consequently, that city's residents have a high median income and high education level. The two final schools are located in suburban cities (Columbia Heights and Hopkins) to the north and west of Minneapolis with diverse populations.

Table 1: Total and Latino Population in Selected Cities

City	Total Pop	Latino Pop	%Latino
Columbia Heights	19,496	2,319	11.9%
Hopkins	17,591	1,390	7.9%
Northfield	20,007	1,685	8.4%
Sleepy Eye	3,599	467	13.0%
Willmar	19,610	4,099	20.9%
Worthington	12,764	4,521	35.4%
St. Paul*	285,068	27,311	9.6%
Minneapolis*	382,578	40,073	10.5%
Minnesota		250,258	4.7%

St. Paul and Minneapolis were not included in the study and are listed for comparison purposes only.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010

[4] This project was originally designed to include 10 schools. Due to Logistical constraints 3 schools were not able to be included in Phase 1 of the project. Nonetheless, current data has begun to show "redundancy" or "saturation" as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), and the research team is confident in the accuracy of these findings. For further discussion on interview sampling please see Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 230-247.

Interviews were conducted with program leaders and staff members to gain an understanding of program design and how specific program components are believed to contribute to the success of Latino students. Program leaders included principals, ELL (English Language Learner) program coordinators, and other senior administrators. Other staff members interviewed included ELL teachers, family and community liaisons, and program staff. Additional interviews were conducted with current upper level students or alumni to gain their perspective on the factors that contributed to their success. These current and former students were identified by program leaders as "successful" based on their academic achievements in high school, enrollment in post-secondary education institutions, or employment. Finally, two interviews were conducted with experts in education policy and research.

Program Selection and Definition of Success

Educational program sites were selected based on graduation rates and state test scores (specifically, the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment- MCA II) from recent years; selection is based on current scores, previous achievement, and growth. All schools also have a significant number of Latino students. Successful students and alumni were identified by program directors and represent students who have done well in the program and have gone on to higher education and success in the workforce.

These indicators provide a basis for comparison between programs and are widely accepted determinants of success used by a variety of institutions including schools themselves and government agencies.. However, this research also addresses the variety of ways students can be successful in their current education, the workforce, and their lives overall, as well as how programs are considered to be successful. The question of program and student success is addressed in interviews in an attempt to understand the different ways that program leaders, staff, students, and community members each understand success.

Project Outcomes

This project has produced two interim reports to the Chicano Latino Affairs Council and a final report to the Minnesota Humanities Center. This report represents a final summary of project activities and research findings. An additional report geared toward a wider public audience will be distributed to the Minnesota state legislature, the Minnesota Department of Education, news outlets, foundations, educational programs, and other interested parties. In addition, the team will develop the initial phase of a strategic communications plan—identifying opportunities to use this report to elevate the findings and recommendations to a wider audience so that, as the Chicano Latino Affairs Council hopes, "Latino Minnesotans and their culture and language are seen as an asset to the state's education systems and are valued and incorporated into policy and practice."

Data and Trends

Population Growth

The percentage of Latino residents in Minnesota is increasing significantly- a major contributor to the increasing diversity of the state overall. Figure 1 shows this growth trend. Currently, almost 5% of Minnesota state residents are Latino. In 1990 Whites made up 93.7% of the population and, while Whites still represent the vast majority of Minnesotans, this number has decreased significantly to 83.1% in 2010. African American, Asian American, and American Indian populations all grew at higher rates than Whites, and Latinos represent the most dramatic increase in population. While the overall population in the state grew by 7.8% between 2000 and 2010, the Latino population grew by nearly 75%, whereas the population of White residents grew by only 1.6% (Kane & Pacas, 2011). These trends are expected to continue: a 2010 report from the Chicano Latino Affairs Council projects that the state of Minnesota will have 492,000 Latino residents by 2030 (Minnesota Humanities Center and Chicano Latino Affairs Council, 2010). Figures 2 and 3 show the distribution of Latinos in Minnesota.

Figure 1

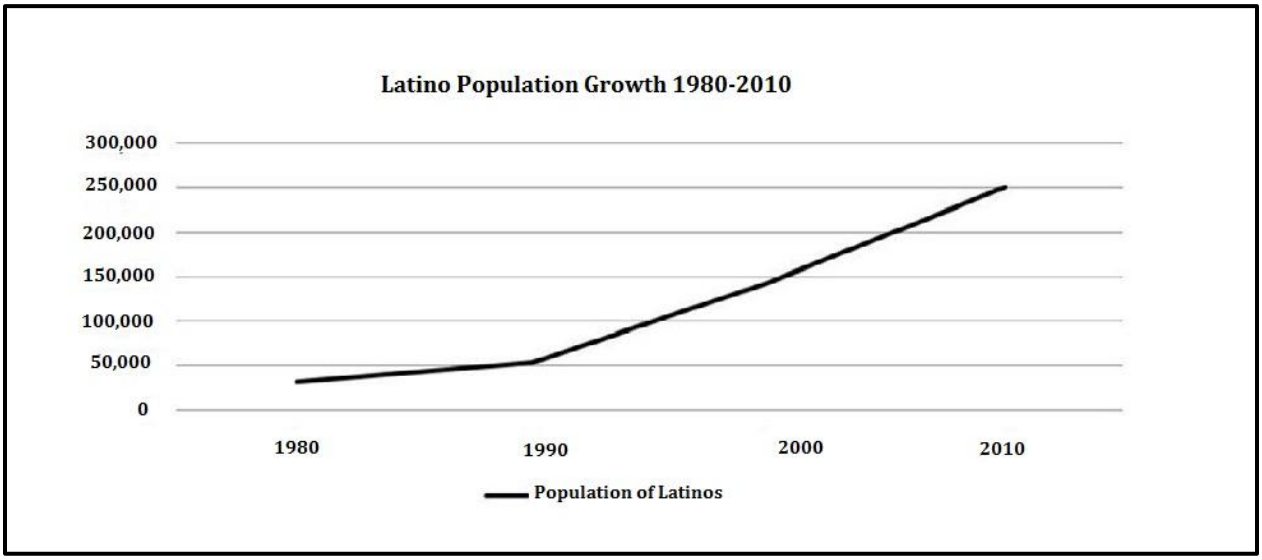


Figure 2

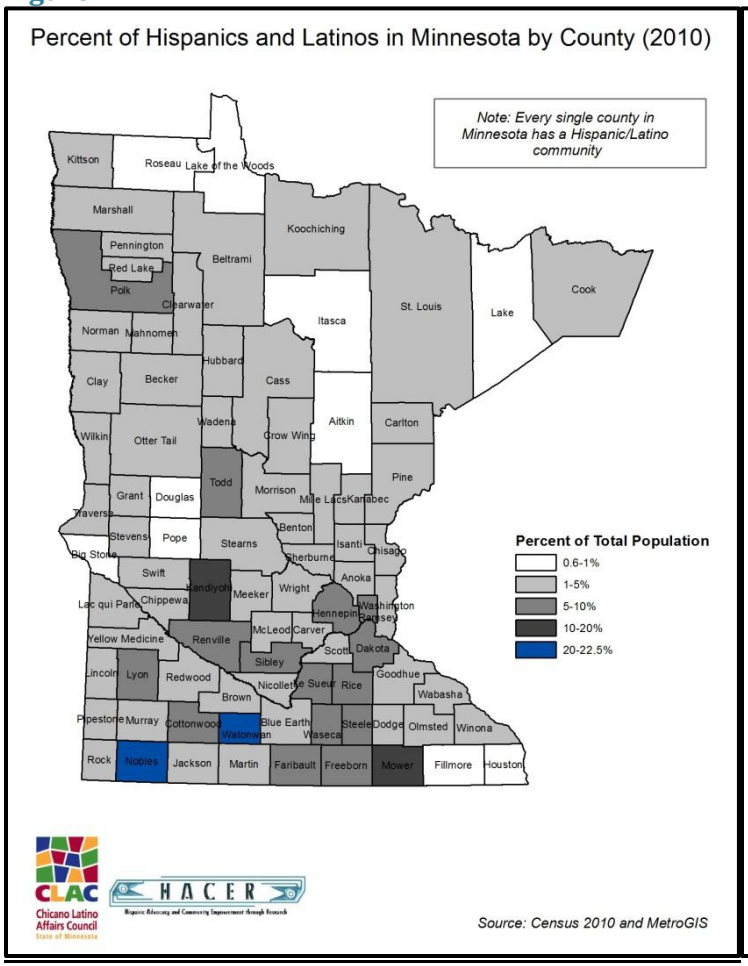
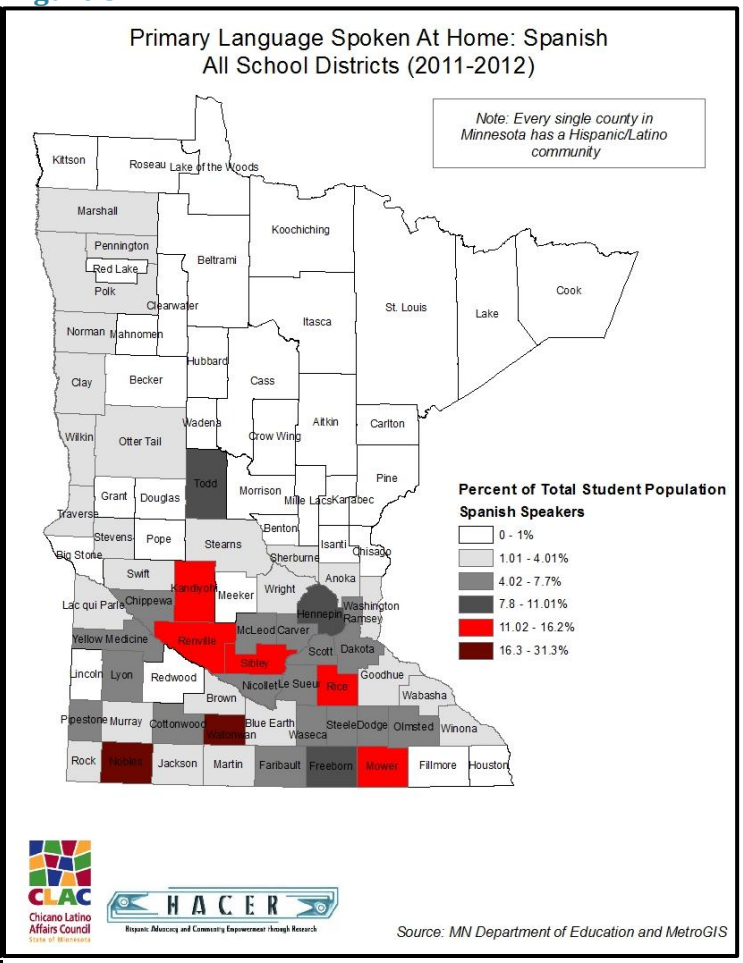
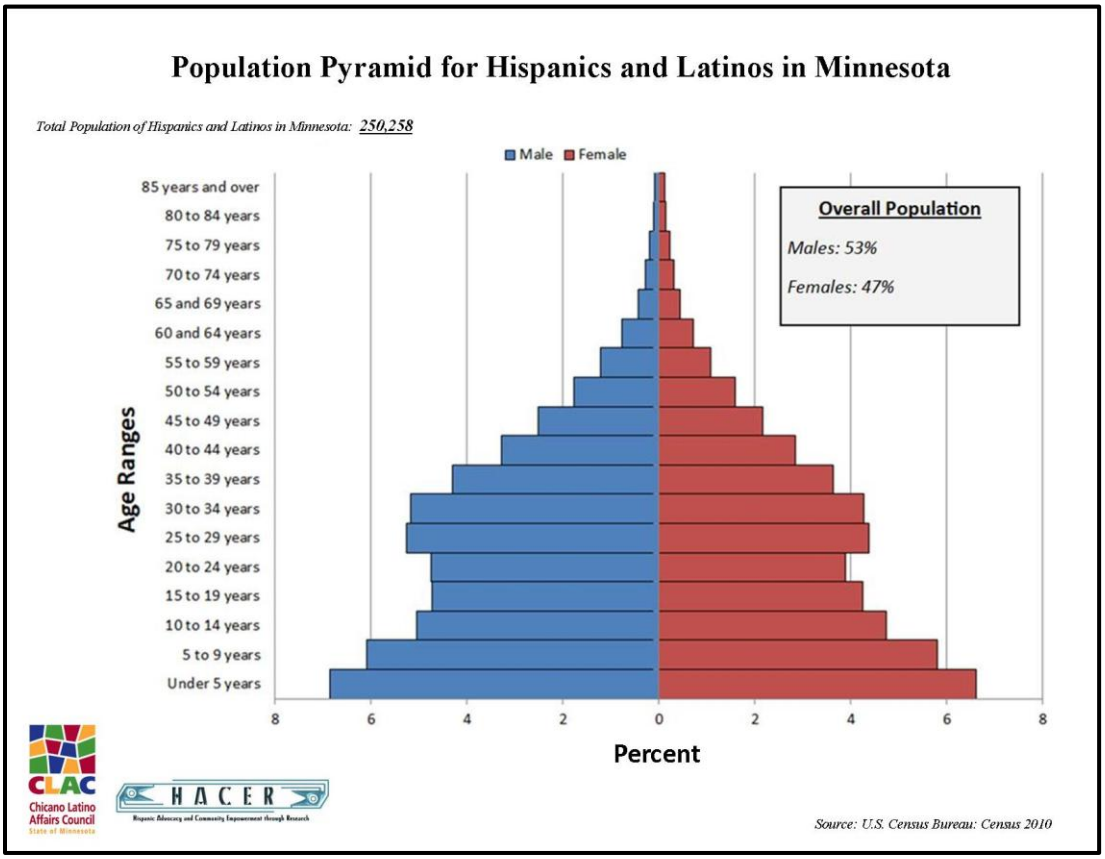


Figure 3



These demographic trends extend to school-age populations. Over half of Latinos are below the age of 30 and over 40% are under 20 (Census, 2010). This is not only portends future changes in the workforce, but has immediate implications for educational policies and practices. Figure 4 shows the age distribution of Latinos in Minnesota. Since 2006, the share of White students in Minnesota schools has decreased from 78.3% to 73.75%, whereas the Latino student population has grown from 5.3% to 7.1% of students. African American, Asian American, and American Indian students have also grown to represent larger proportions of the student population. The percentage of students who were English Language Learners also grew from 7.1% to 7.8% between 2006 and 2012, and Spanish is the most common language other than English spoken at home (Minnesota Department of Education, 2012).

Figure 4



Trends in Latino Education

Although Minnesota overall ranks highly on achievement measurements such as standardized tests, college entrance exams, and graduation rates, it has one of the most extreme gaps between achievement for Latino and White students in the country. In 2011, the statewide graduation rate was 76.9% for all students and the dropout rate was 4.8% for all students. The graduation rate for Latino students was only 50.5%, a full 33 percentage points lower than the 83.5% graduation rate for White students. Additionally, whereas only 3% of White students dropped out of school, nearly 1 in 8 (13.5%) Latino students dropped out of school (Minnesota Department of Education, 2012).

The K-12 education gap unavoidably extends to higher education: as of 2010, 19.1% of Latinos had an Associate's Degree or higher; at the same time, 33.4% of Whites and 49% of Asians had an Associate's degree or higher (American Community Survey, 2012). Increasing the level of higher education attainment for Latino and other students of color is essential to maintaining Minnesota's exemplary record.

While these numbers are disheartening, there have been some positive trends. Minnesota's graduation rate for all students has steadily increased from 72.5% to 76.9%, and the dropout rate has decreased from 8.2% to 4.8% between 2003 and 2010. Even more promising, the graduation rate for Latinos has made strides. In 2003, only one third (33.4%) of Latino students graduated from high school in four years, and nearly one third (32.23%) dropped out of school. The gap between these rates for Latino and White students has also narrowed significantly, from a 45.5 percentage point gap in graduation rates and a 26.5 percentage point gap in dropout rates between Whites and Latinos in 2003 to 33.0 and 10.5 point gap respectively in 2010 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2012). Though not as dramatic, graduation and dropout rates for White students have also made positive gains, indicating that the improved educational attainment for Latino students and decreased gaps align with educational advancement for all students. This evidence counters misconceptions that narrowing gaps are due to decreased achievement in White students and that positive gains for Latino students (and other students of color) come at the expense of other students. Additionally, between 2006 and 2011, overall participation in AP exams grew by 62% and participation of students of color increased by 53%. During the same time period, the number of students who took an IB (International Baccalaureate) exam increased among the overall student population, and the number of students of color who took an IB exam more than doubled (Minnesota Legislative Campaign for Achievement Now: MinnCAN, 2012).

Table 2: Graduation and Dropout Rate Trends

	Graduation Rate			Dropout Rate		
	2003	**2010**	**Change**	**2003**	**2010**	**Change**
Minnesota	72.5%	76.9%	+4.4	8.2%	4.8%	-3.4
Latinos	33.4%	50.5%	+17.1	32.2%	13.5%	-18.7
Whites	78.9%	83.5%	+4.6	5.6%	3.0%	-2.6
Gap	45.5	33.0	-11.5	26.5	10.5	-16

Source: Minnesota Department of Education, 2012

Economic, Workforce, and Community Impact

Evidence indicates that jobs requiring a high school or higher educational attainment are increasingly important for economic growth (Gonzales, Wasted Talent and Broken Dreams: The Lost Potential of Undocumented Students, 2007). According to a 2011 Governor's Workforce Development Council and Georgetown University report, Minnesota is the 2nd state most in need of

a well-educated workforce compared to the rest of the country: by 2018, 70% of jobs in Minnesota will require a post-secondary education (Governor's Workforce Development Council, 2011).

The increasing need for well-educated Minnesotans, combined with the rising proportion of Latinos in the Minnesota population, emphasize the need to develop a strong workforce within our own community. The October 2012 edition of Postsecondary Education Opportunity emphasizes the importance of changing demographics in the context of lower educational attainment for Latinos, stating that, "Hispanics will be a quarter of all employment, voters, taxpayers, and parents. And unless their higher educational attainment is tripled their contribution to national welfare will be far less than that of the white non-Hispanic population that they are quickly replacing (p. 3)." In 2008, IBM Corporation hosted a conference recognizing the essential role of Latinos in the country's economic future, particularly emphasizing the importance of Latinos in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) careers. A resultant report from this conference highlights the increasing role of STEM professions, which often require a higher education degree, in our economy and the necessity to include the growing population of Latinos in this field. As the report states, "Creating more Latino STEM professionals is not just a matter of equal representation. Given demographic trends, it is also essential to maintaining America's competitive edge in the global market (IBM Corporation, 2008, p. 4)."

Reports such as these serve as reminders that higher educational attainment for Latinos has real economic impact. The Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that if even one half of those who dropped out of school in Minnesota during 2008 had graduated, Latino students alone would have added a combined $7.3 million in additional income, $5 million in spending, $2.1 million in investment, $22.3 million in homes, and $400,000 in automobiles on average in a year in the state. Additionally, not only do well-educated workers add to economic growth through income, investment, and tax revenue, they also contribute cost savings for health care, welfare, and crime prevention (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). While their calculations are not specific to the Latino or immigrant communities, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) highlights these cost savings for all educated workers, which emphasizes the importance of ensuring educational opportunities for students of all groups. The Minnesota Department of Education also cites benefits to the community overall, including higher rates of civic engagement and volunteerism, and lower rates of involvement in crime by more educated populations (Minnesota Humanities Center and Chicano Latino Affairs Council, 2010). Multiple authors highlight the importance of immigrants to the United States and Minnesota economy, stating that immigrants are vital parts of communities and essential to fulfilling future labor force needs. This is true both for individuals as members of the work force and their contributions to the business sector (Godinez & Espejel, 2010; Gonzales, 2007).

Additionally, Latinos contribute valuable skills to the workforce. For example, not only is bilingual and bicultural fluency key to the success of Latino students in the US academic environment, it is essential to our state's and country's success in the global economy. Sattin-Bajaj and Suárez-Orozco (n.d.) state that, "The ability to communicate in multiple languages is a prerequisite for advancement in the globally linked economies and societies of today, and bilingualism should be fostered in schools (p. 14)."

Supporting Latino Students

Barriers to Student Achievement

Previous research finds that the challenges Latino students face often stem from struggles at home and can include a family's financial situation, parents' work schedules, immigration status, and language barriers. Often, students also face challenges related to the structure of the school system and a disconnect between their culture and the dominant culture of schools in the United States. Many of the issues facing Latino students, and especially Latino immigrants, stem from financial difficulties. Soltero (2008) notes that,

> 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. Latino children face many challenges related to family income and structure, parental work patterns, educational attainment, English proficiency, and health insurance coverage (p. 14).

Barriers like inadequate health care, poor nutrition, transportation, and family responsibilities often stem from financial hardship and can significantly affect a student's education (Contreras, 2011; Lewis, 2004; Rosario J. R., 2006). Authors find that Latino students are more likely to enter school with significant disadvantages compared to their peers. For example, these factors can directly influence students' education through access to early childhood opportunities, placing them on an unequal trajectory from the start (Contreras, 2011; Rosario J. R., 2006). They have a significant influence on students' education, from their ability to complete assignments to their motivation in school. Other barriers stem from societal constraints such as cultural stereotypes or state and national policies. This section summarizes the main challenges that the literature has found Latino students to be facing, as well as the experiences of the educational professionals and students interviewed by our team for this project.

First, language is a common challenge for Latino students, both those who migrate to the United States and those who grow up in immigrant communities. It is widely noted that English Language Learners (ELLs) struggle academically (Sattin-Bajaj & Suárez-Orozco). Language barriers create significant challenges, particularly for students entering the United States in high school. Not only do they face more advanced academic requirements and more complex subject matter, they are often required to master the language before they are able to fully participate in school, which adds significant practical challenges to students' ability to graduate high school within four years (Sattin-Bajaj & Suárez-Orozco). Language can also have a significant effect on students' ability to perform well on standardized assessments. While it may only take several months to acquire conversational English skills, mastering academic language skills can take up to 7 years or more (Lewis, 2004; Soltero, 2008). This presents an additional policy barrier and challenge for schools: despite this widely-cited statistic, Minnesota only funds schools for 5 years of ELL education per student (Minnesota Department of Education, 2011).

These factors summarize the practical language barriers that stem from an ideological language barrier in the United States, where multilingualism may be viewed as a liability rather than an asset

(Sattin-Bajaj & Suárez-Orozco). Due to this ideology, native language skills are rarely promoted in schools, which require them to focus programming solely on English language acquisition rather than bilingual or native language cultivation. Rather than supporting students' natural language skills through comprehensive ELL education, program leaders are required to implement programs that seek to push students out of ELL education as quickly as possible and students are required to meet basic standards that do not consider their unique needs and talents. This affects not only English language programming and the perception of others towards English Learners, but students' own aspirations and self-perception (Lewis, 2004). This approach stands in stark contrast to recent research that underscores the significant advantage of speaking multiple languages. For example, studies presented at last year's meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science found that bilingual children are better able to prioritize tasks than monolinguals and that multilingualism may help protect against age-related mental decline, such as Alzheimers and dementia (Scientific American, 2011).

A second related challenge is school systems' general lack of cultural fluency or inclusion. When youth do not see their own cultures and identities reflected in their school curriculum and environment, they may disengage from their education- their responses can range from a basic lack of interest in school, to hostility or lowered self-expectations (Schmidt, 2001). Not only does cultural content affect classroom learning, but students may also face barriers in understanding school rules and norms. Additionally, Latino teachers and administrators are underrepresented in schools, depriving Latino students of access to staff that could serve as language and cultural interpreters and positive role models. This can further alienate students from school (Monzo & Rueda, 2001; Soltero, 2008).

Third, Latino students and parents generally have little understanding of the U.S. educational system and few tools to access or influence it. For example, despite Latino youths' optimism and motivation, they and their families often lack information about college, including admission requirements and financial aid options, which impact their ability to pursue higher education, and by extension their motivation in high school. If higher education seems unobtainable, they have little reason to strive for excellence in high school (Kao & Tienda, 1998).

A fourth commonly identified challenge is the cultural and practical disconnect between parents and schools that makes it challenging for parents to identify the best options for engaging in their child's educational experience. "Parent involvement" is regularly cited as key to student success, and the lack thereof as a significant barrier. However, while Latino parents place high value on education and educational achievement for their children, they may lack the social, cultural, and financial means to fully support them (Lewis, 2004). Parents may not understand the schools' expectations for their children or their own involvement. Lee and Bowen (2006) found that involvement at school occurred more often for parents whose culture and lifestyle were more congruent with the school's culture. This includes not only ethnic culture, but the inconsistency between the school's culture and the culture of low-income families. Latino families in many cases face challenges as members of multiple disadvantaged communities, including immigrant, minority, and low-income. Additionally, despite a firm commitment to support their children's education, parents may face practical language barriers or time constraints that make it difficult to provide as

much support as they would like. Cammarota and Romero (2006) state that "teachers and administrators often cite 'culture' and 'parents' as explanations for the failure of students of color (p. 17)" and that this ignores the larger societal factors that shape both the school and student experiences.

School culture and norms have also failed to address the challenges Latino families face when their practical needs can impede students' ability to fulfill educational obligations. While families value education, urgent family needs often supersede youth's academic responsibilities. Latino families place high expectations on students to fulfill family obligations through financial support and involvement in household responsibilities. Lopez (2009) found that foreign born Latino youth were more likely than native born to be supporting or helping to support a family either in the U.S. or in their country of origin. Additionally, parents' work commitments and their frequent need to juggle multiple jobs can result in work schedules that are incompatible with school events, such as parent-teacher conferences and family functions (Wooley, 2009; Sosa 2012).

High mobility due to family situation is another challenge for many Latino youth. The mobility of families employed as migrant workers in the agricultural sector primarily affects schools in rural agricultural communities; meanwhile, the mobility that confronts urban and suburban schools is generally due to families' economic circumstances and lack of stable housing. In both cases, students may start school late, move during the school year, and attend multiple schools; they can lose up to two weeks of school per move. Not only do students lose instruction time, but when youth view their education as temporary and unstable, they may be less committed to school (Lewis, 2004).

These factors summarize the challenges Latino students and families face in their efforts to excel in an educational environment that was designed for White middle class students and which still generally views students from cultures outside of the mainstream as problems to fix (Rosario J. R., 2006). Other barriers Latino students face are based on external societal, legal, and cultural factors. Immigration status adds an additional dimension of complexity that can influence Latino education. The Pew Research Center (2012) found that low dropout, high school completion, and college enrollment rates among Latinos can primarily be attributed to lower rates for foreign born Latino youth. All immigrant groups face unique challenges to excelling academically, but many Latino students face acute uncertainty due to their immigration status. While they may aspire to higher education and a professional career, the prospect that achieving their goals may not be possible can lower their self-confidence and commitment to school. They face practical barriers regarding eligibility to attend higher education institutions and administrative application barriers (Abergo and Gonzales, 2010; Alexio, Chin, Fennelly, & Shurilla, 2012; Gonzales, 2007). If they do pursue higher education, they face uncertainty around their ability to legally work in the United States and apply the education they have worked to achieve. For many students, the multiple barriers they face become insurmountable (Abergo and Gonzales, 2010; Gonzales, 2007).

Finally, stereotypes and the absence of positive role models have a direct influence on students' performance in school. Negative peer affiliations can have a significant effect on behaviors and decision making of students in general (Rosario J. R., 2006). For example, research shows that youth with friends who have dropped out of high school are much more likely to do the same

(Ellengogen & Chamberland, 1997; Hess, 2000; Rumberger & Thomas, 2000; Velez & Saenz, 2001). Additionally, many schools lack both adult Latino role models and positive peer role models. When few Latino students graduate and go on to higher education, it may be difficult for Latino youth to see a viable academic path for themselves. Years of research have shown that the social relationships Latino students have at home and at school with people such as parents, friends and teachers are closely correlated with their school behavior, beliefs and perceptions about school, and ultimately their academic achievement (Baker, 1999; Shouse, 1996; Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). Other supporting evidence shows that negative stereotypes and low expectations towards Latino students have psychological effects on low self-esteem and frequently impact academic performance and achievement (Gonzales, P.M. Blanton, H., & Williams, K.J., 2002; Rosario J. R., 2006; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

As noted, these barriers stem from and societal and cultural disconnect between Latino students, their school culture, and the educational policies that govern school processes. Countless authors have highlighted the role of this cultural disconnect, not only for overall educational achievement, but for multiple components influencing education, from testing and degree attainment to things like discipline and classroom dynamics. These experiences are directly related to the historical processes of race relations in the United States and student's current experiences with race inside and outside of school. Furthermore, these experiences are not limited to Latino students and are documented for students of color from a variety of backgrounds (Boddie, 1997; Gonzales, P.M., Blanton, H.; & Williams, K.J., 2002; Gordon, Piana, & Keleher, 2000; Kohli, 2009; Kohli & Solorzano, 2012; Orfield &Eaton, 1996; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997).

Although this topic was not the focus of our interviews, conversations with both program staff and students touched on the challenges faced by students in the schools that were included in the study. The following section presents the strategies that have been successful in addressing these challenges.

Several of the interviewees included in our study highlighted a language barrier as one of the main challenges facing their high school students. They placed particular emphasis on the unique challenges faced by high school students who immigrate to the United States without English language fluency. Program leaders discussed the practical barriers created by language differences, but also emphasized the ideological barriers around language acquisition, particularly as it relates to state policy and educational requirements. One high school principal summarized that,

> *We're on a scale of every kid has to have 18 required credits, 18.5 and 11.5 elective credits, that they have to obtain before they graduate. Boy, that's pretty tough for some of these kids if they are in ELL classes the first 2 years of their life here. How do they pick up everything that they possibility need?*

Interviewees also supported findings in the literature that ELL approaches that support students' native languages are most effective, and expressed frustration with current ELL policy. Multiple interviewees stated the opinion that ELL education should be ongoing throughout a student's academic career and focused on support of native language fluency and an asset based approach. They expressed frustration that current policies promote a deficit-based approach to ELL

education- focusing solely on English language acquisition and pushing students through ELL programs as quickly as possible. Several interviewees noted the 5 year limit on ELL funding as a significant barrier to fully supporting their Latino students.

Conversations with interviewees also mirrored findings in the literature thatdiscuss the cultural barriers families face, particularly in understanding the education system and involvement. Several interviewees noted an ideological barrier that they associated with the Latino culture: parents place a high level of respect on teachers and the school and trust that the school will "take care of education." Educators and administrators felt that parents were cautious to impose on the school and felt that one of the main challenges they faced as educators was to convince parents that the school valued and welcomed their input.

Interviewees found Latino educators and staff to be essential to bridging cultural gaps and connecting with Latino students and families and they lamented their underrepresentation. Principals stated their desire to hire more Latinos and their frustration with the dearth of candidates. In addition to the limited availability of qualified candidates, schools faced decreasing or insufficient funding for family liaisons and counselors, who they saw both as essential in connecting with families, and a practical alternative when Latino teachers were unavailable.

Interviews also supported findings in the literature related to the challenges associated with family responsibilities, migration, and immigration status. Both educators and youth interviewed confirmed the important role of fulfilling family responsibilities and providing support to families. Youth expressed that they felt strongly that it was their responsibility to support their families.

Finally, interviewees reflected on the role of negative peer influences, the absence of positive adult role models, and negative stereotypes in students' interest and dedication in school. For example, students discussed feeling pressure from their friends and classmates not to excel academically, and cited feeling alienated when they challenged these norms. Teachers and school staff also hold negative stereotypes of Latino students, which can affect their expectations, encouragement, and relationships with those students. This affects the way they engage with students and students' own perceptions of their academic goals and abilities.

Successful Program Elements

While the barriers Latino students face may seem daunting, these students continue to excel at increasing rates across the country and in Minnesota. The program elements highlighted in this section demonstrate the ways that some schools and other educational programs support these students and address the challenges they face. Our findings from conversations with representatives from schools and educational programs are supported by previous research on youth development, education, and examples of other programs that have been successful with Latino students. Furthermore, these findings have direct implications for the role of policy in supporting educational success for Latino students.

Individual Attention, Personal Relationships, and Collaborative Teaching

Educational strategies that have been successful with Latino students place an emphasis on individual attention for each student in order to understand their unique barriers, individual strengths, and goals and ambitions. During our conversations with program leaders and staff, interviewees emphasized the importance of building relationships with students and understanding their personal stories. Academic efforts were then tailored to each student. As one ELL Coordinator and former ELL teacher stated, *"As a teacher, working with those kids, the number one most effective way [to work with them] was building relationships; absolutely was building relationships."* Indeed, every interviewee we spoke with highlighted building relationships or a personal connection with students as the most essential prerequisite for fostering student success; the majority of interviewees highlighted this as the single most important aspect of their educational efforts. Often, simple gestures like one-on-one conversations with students and showing a personal interest in their lives was sufficient to begin building these relationships. One principal noted that,

> *There isn't a series of laws, and rules on the board, and policies and procedures that are right. They won't work. Unless you develop the personal relationship, and have mechanisms in place, and adults that have the skill and ability to do it.*

Along with building strong relationships, an individual understanding of each student is crucial. Interviewees cited the importance of getting to know students and learning about their interests and aspirations as well as their background and home environment. This allowed teachers and administrators to better meet student needs and support them most effectively. Students supported these assertions, specifying individual attention from a particular teacher or general support from staff as the most influential ways schools supported them in their education. This was true both for students who were already on a positive academic path and those who were able to "turn it around."

Collaboration between teachers and a supportive staff culture was an integral part of this. Schools cited the importance of collaboration among staff to maintain consistency and create a "web of support" for students. Representatives from several schools talked about using individualized data

on students to monitor their academic performance regularly and highlighted the success they had with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that support teachers in these efforts.

Several interviewees commented on the misalignment between state graduation testing and standards and the realities of many students. While they recognized the importance of common standards, they noted how these requirements create a barrier for many Latino students, particularly immigrants and English learners. They rarely relied on these factors as indicators of success for their students and instead focused on individual indicators of growth and accomplishment of personal goals While high expectations are important, placing high demands on students without in-depth personal support has proven ineffective. During our conversations, program leaders pointed out these inconsistencies. Rather than creating high expectations and increasing motivation, arbitrary and imposed requirements and measures of "success" hinder schools' capacity to fully implement these types of programs. When discussing what they considered "success" for students, program leaders focused on helping students identify and meet individual goals, facilitating their development into productive and self-directed individuals.

Literature on best practices and exemplary programs supports this assertion. Cammarota and Romero identify "authentic caring" as one of the three integral components of critically compassionate intellectualism, an educational model designed to address the unique educational needs of Latino students. Authentic caring is characterized by emotional, meaningful connections between students where a teacher "demonstrates a real interest with the students' overall wellbeing (p. 21)." Cammarota and Romero also note that "Listening to the students' problems and showing some compassion for their situation may be necessary actions for educators to improve relationships with their students (p. 21)." Rosario (2006) also identifies "caring and nurturing spaces" as essential to counteracting negative peer pressure and fostering student engagement. He cites the essential components of this being "caring, enthusiasm for teaching, being flexible, stimulating curiosity, and allowing students to express themselves creatively and freely (p. 5)."

The Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets (2012), which have been utilized broadly by both practitioners and researchers, list several key assets related to the importance of positive relationships for adolescent (specified as 6-12th grade or 11-18 years old) development. These include support from family as well as support from adults in the community, teachers, and positive peer relationships. Rodriguez and Morrobel (2004) promote positive youth development as the most important avenue to support education for all students, but which has particular value for Latino students, identifying "successful youth development as our strongest tool for preempting the need for prevention and intervention programming, beginning by reorienting our attention toward assets rather than deficits (p. 109)."

Several cases of exemplary programs demonstrate these principles. Although this research focuses on Minnesota schools and programs, it is useful to take into account elements of success from programs in other states and nations. Finland's educational system has been ranked as first in the world several times since 2000 by the OECD; its system also consistently ranks as the most equal.[5]

[5] A brief review of the Finnish education system has been included as part of this research as CLAC and MDE have been focusing on the lessons Finland's system can provide to Minnesota; including a complementary study to

In Finland, individualized teaching plays a central role in students' education. Students often have the same teacher for several years, allowing them to build trusting personal relationships with teachers. It also gives teachers the opportunity to get to know each student and family and develop effective ways to meet each student's needs. Teaching styles in Finland also center on personal relationships and support- for example, students call teachers by their first names, and students in secondary school meet with a counselor two hours each week (Vitrella, 2012).

As another example, in his analysis of 90/90/90 schools (defined as schools where 90% of students were eligible for free or reduced priced lunch, 90% or more were members of ethnic or minority groups, and 90% or more of students met the district or state academic standards in reading or another area), Reeves (2003) identified the importance of "assessment" compared to "testing." In assessment, student performance is analyzed to understand the individual needs of each student and how best to support them. Furthermore, students are provided with frequent feedback to help them understand their own progress and areas in need of improvement. Reeves highlights that, "The penalty for poor performance is not a low grade, followed by a forced march to the next unit. Rather, student performance that is less than proficient is followed by multiple opportunities to improve performance (p. 4)." Data driven assessments are a similar approach that allow teachers, administrators, and other staff members to track student progress and identify needs.

The importance of collaboration among teachers was also cited in the literature. Reeves found that in 90/90/90 schools, teachers meet regularly to collaboratively assess students. Additionally, Sattin-Bajaj and Suárez-Orozco highlight that,

> The education of English language learners must be recognized as a school-wide priority for which every educator and support staff member in the school building is responsible. School personnel too often view the instruction of ELL students as belonging primarily in the domain of a small cohort of ESL teachers (p. 16).

Policy Implications

While it would be impossible to legislate "positive relationships" between school staff and students, this theme does have several policy implications. First, individualized, data-driven student assessments should be emphasized. Second, both legislation and school policy can create mechanisms that facilitate teacher collaboration. In both of these cases "assessment" rather than "testing," as defined by Reeves, should be promoted. Rather than providing a summative picture of student performance at the end of the school year, student data and assessments should be collected and reviewed regularly and used to support students. Furthermore, this data can facilitate teacher collaboration and teaching practices that address student weaknesses and bolster their strengths. There are also implications for teaching practices. While evidence-based teaching strategies are important, teacher training should also place an emphasis on skills that help

---

identify elements of success in Finland that might be replicated into best practices for overcoming Latino educational challenges within Minnesota.

educators navigate relationships with students and families, and identify and address their personal needs and goals, rather than focusing solely on pedagogy.

Fostering Student Motivation: Identifying and Achieving Goals

In addition to identifying the personal barriers and needs of each student, adults in successful schools and programs emphasize the importance of understanding students' aspirations and goals. Program leaders and staff identify students' interests and goals for the future, and utilize them as tools to motivate and encourage them. Again, personal relationships and an individual understanding of each student's unique situation are key for this approach to succeed.

Motivation and encouragement are a central component of these strategies. Program leaders noted the importance of persistence in consistently pushing and encouraging students to define and meet their goals. Students themselves highlighted the importance of having staff members whom they trusted and with whom they felt comfortable, and who pushed them to complete their homework and succeed academically. As one student reflected,

> *My junior year is when I guess you could say I matured, I grew up, and [the after school program director] knocked some sense into me. So yeah, so that's when I started understanding better like the concept of education, like, life, and just pretty much education. Because she really enforced it, like, she doesn't give up on you. She'll push you, even though you don't want to, but she'll do it.*

The school leaders we talked with also made efforts to include Latino students in leadership positions and provided opportunities for them to influence school policy and represent the school.

Again, collaboration among staff and school culture were central components of the programs' success. One program leader cited the importance of working with staff throughout the school to provide a culture of high expectations, encouragement, and motivation. This required combating negative stereotypes among staff members towards Latino students. While these stereotypes may persist to a degree, the staff members we spoke with were optimistic about changes in perception among staff in their schools. Among the factors contributing to this, interviewees highlighted giving students the opportunity to represent themselves to staff members and showcasing the successes of their students.

Current literature again offers examples that support these principles. Rosario (200) notes "student motivation" as one of the key factors in student engagement, emphasizing the role of teachers to support students' own internal motivation through "praise, arousing interest, and recognizing and rewarding students' sense of mastery, task completion, and acquisition of knowledge and skills (p. 4)." Reflecting the comments of interviewees, he identifies the importance of caring and nurturing relationships between teachers in helping students to connect their education to their own interests and lives outside of school. Furthermore, this theme summarizes several of the fundamental development principles identified by the Search Institute, including internal elements such as motivation to be successful in school, a sense of responsibility, and self-esteem; and

external elements such as high expectations from parents and teachers, positive relationships with teachers, and a supportive school environment (Search Institute, 2012).

Sosa and Gomez (2012) and Pang and Sablan (1998) discuss how stereotypes affect teachers' perceptions of their own teaching efficacy and stress the importance of dispelling these stereotypes in order for teachers to hold all of their students to the same high standards. Other authors support this assertion with evidence that in schools with teachers that consider their students' diverse backgrounds and learning abilities as assets rather than deficits, and where there is support and encouragement from staff, the achievement gap is significantly lower (Lee & Smith, 1996).

Several authors also discuss the role of counselors in helping students identify goals and fostering motivation. Often, counselors are students' most direct link to information on post-secondary education and future careers. In order to fully support these students, counselors must not only be knowledgeable in a range of topics related to post-secondary options, but able to make meaningful individual connections with diverse students. These skills are especially important for undocumented students and their families, who face additional obstacles and confusion around the laws and procedures regarding college application and attendance (Gonzales, 2010; Gilbert, 2010).

The IBM report on Latinos in STEM careers provides an example of how students' current interests can be used to motivate them to excel academically and help them to identify goals. The authors of the report discuss leveraging youths' existing interest in technology and media to cultivate interest in STEM fields. For example, social media and technology can be used to generate excitement about STEM careers. This strategy can be used in any academic area, and across academic disciplines. With knowledge of students' interests and passions, teachers and teaching staff can help students draw the connection to understand the relevance of these interests with academic and career pursuits.

Policy Implications

While this theme generally represents a culture within schools, the most important policy implication is to support programs that provide the connections between students and teachers that facilitate opportunities for motivation and individual goal identification. This is another role of the aforementioned policies that facilitate individualized student data review and teacher collaborations. Providing appropriate training and funding for counselors is another avenue that allows schools to give students individualized goal-oriented consultation and motivation. A final component of ensuring these practices is developing school or district-based policies such as professional development opportunities, staff requirements, and creating a supportive positive school culture and norms. A commitment to dispelling stereotypes toward Latino students is essential to doing this.

Exposure

In order to help students identify goals, maintain motivation, and create connections between school and their lives, program leaders stressed the importance of exposure to higher education, careers, and other opportunities beyond high school. Such exposure helps students understand the relevance of their high school education and connect academics to their lives outside of school. Some of these activities include organizing college visits, encouraging students to take advantage of PSEO (or Post-Secondary Enrollment Option, in which high school students take courses at a higher education institution) opportunities, exposing students to a broad array of careers, and including community service projects in curriculum. In addition, school leaders emphasized that such activities provide students with positive role models in the community, especially those who are Latino professionals.

Interviewees highlighted the importance of these programs in allowing students to see a path for themselves after high school. Several interviewees promoted the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, which allows undocumented students to live and work in the United States under certain circumstances, as a major improvement in supporting these efforts. This policy fosters confidence for undocumented students and allows them to see a more viable educational and employment future.

Program leaders stressed the importance of connecting school curriculum to life outside of high school and conveyed a common opinion that vocational and employment-based education should be valued on the same level as an academic track education. Several interviewees highlighted the importance of vocational programs and educational opportunities for students who choose not to follow a path requiring a four-year college degree. They believed that these career or vocation-focused programs often provide more opportunities, particularly for Latino students, than does a narrow college-focused education that disenfranchises many students. When only given one option towards a goal that seems unobtainable, students often become discouraged and disengaged from education. Program leaders also emphasized the importance of vocational careers to their communities and the economy. One frustrated principal summarized his perspective:

> *The state just doesn't seem to make that same connection to real world jobs, they want everybody to be ready for liberal arts education, which is in my mind ridiculous. They're gonna disenfranchise a huge population of kids. And chief amongst them would be a lot of the kids in our school that are of lower socio-economic background, and they don't have parents that have an education background, and they're just trying to take the first rung up, and that would be a two-year community college, and go get a job that requires some technical school, but you don't need to know what the periodic table of [elements] is… They need to make conscious decisions about academics based upon where the kids are at, and the needs of communities where they live. Yes, it sounds good that we're going to be a global society, and America needs to be the leaders of the community… but what about the jobs that we have available that are accessible to these kids right now? We have agricultural, welding positions, we have machinery positions, we have those types of positions, positions available right in our community.*

Rosenbaum (2008) highlights the importance of work-readiness programs, which focus on preparing students for life after high school by connecting them to career information and opportunities. In these programs, teachers and schools provide connections to employment, internships, and career exposure. These programs encourage student engagement by connecting them to higher education and careers, thereby making their high school experience more meaningful. They foster skills that are useful in a work environment while also supporting academic advancement. These programs, and the connections between schools or teachers and employers, can both improve student academics and increase their employment opportunities after high school or college. Rosenbaum highlights that, "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. Work readiness programs can show students the importance of further education and also provide them with the skills to handle college demands (p. 71)."

It is important to note that the Finnish education system incorporates vocational and polytechnic education as a central component of the overall education system. Youth spend at least two weeks in the workplace in lower secondary school and are able to tailor their upper level secondary education towards either a vocational/technical path or an academic path (Vitrella, 2012). This system is designed to ensure that all students complete an upper-secondary education and is designed to "prevent dead ends in all areas of education, including vocational education, so that it is always possible to progress to higher studies (Korpela, 2012, p. 12)." Additionally, the IBM report on Latinos in STEM careers recognizes the importance of exposing Latino students to STEM careers by showcasing examples of Latinos in these fields and by providing opportunities for students to learn about and become interested in these careers.

Data shows that in Minnesota high schools in 2011, students who took at least 280 hours of career tech courses throughout the year, including PSEO courses, had a graduation rate of 97.1%. Even more promising, Latino students who took these courses had a 94.8% graduation rate, "economically disadvantaged" students graduated at a 95% rate, and migrant students graduated at a 95.3% rate. The gap between Latino and White (97.7%) graduation rates is nearly eliminated- only 5 percentage points compared to the 33 percentage point gap overall.

These program examples are some of the ways that students are able to counteract the discriminatory effects of societal discrimination and an unequal education system. Due to these systems, majority population students often have disproportionate access to social and cultural capital. Through these programs, Latino and other students of color are able to access professional and academic networks that they are often otherwise excluded from (Conchas, 2003; Cooper, 2010; Monkman, 2005).

Policy Implications

The policy implications for facilitating exposure to higher education and career opportunities are more direct than those for previous themes. First, policy should support opportunities for students to gain exposure to higher education. In general, policy should support programs that connect

students to higher education opportunities and allow them to experience higher education and learn about college and university requirements. Interviewees noted specific statewide programs, and several interviewees placed an emphasis on opportunities for students to visit colleges or participate in university programs, such as PSEO and short term college courses and camps. Legislation should be implemented that strengthens these programs and allows schools to expand their offerings and include more students.

Second, while academic rigor is important, more emphasis should be placed on career-readiness. Policy should allow for more students to access career opportunities- including training, professional connections, and work experience- while in high school. Furthermore, state educational requirements should be reexamined to ensure that they support all students and provide opportunities for them to pursue a variety of careers.

Counselors play an important role in connecting students to both higher education and career opportunities. In order to do this successfully, they must rely on the aforementioned tactics of building relationships with students, understanding their individual situations, and motivating them to achieve their own personal goals. These skills are mandatory to ensuring that students are not "tracked" and that each student is able to access the post-secondary path best for them. The role of policy is to provide appropriate training to ensure that they are both knowledgeable in a range of post-secondary opportunities and their requirements, and able to build relationships with students and bridge cultural gaps. Funding and training appropriate staff of counselors is the most direct policy implication.

It should be noted that career readiness need not be exclusive to vocational careers. Career preparation and exposure is equally important for students who intend to pursue a career that requires further education beyond high school. As previously discussed, a successful approach to preparing students for life after high school and meeting the needs of the state's economy requires that attention is paid to addressing students' personal goals while supporting their individual needs.

Finally, policies that facilitate opportunities for undocumented students to access higher education and careers are essential. While Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals is an important starting point, it is both temporary and insufficient. A state level Dream Act and a national DREAM Act are both necessary to provide full opportunities to their students. A state level Dream Act would allow clarity to students and families and facilitate the higher education application process. A national level DREAM Act would solidify these opportunities and allow students to fulfill their goals and aspirations as well as contribute to the state and national community as full members of society.

High Expectations, Academic Rigor, and Promoting Upper Level Academic Opportunities

Program leaders stressed the importance of pushing students academically, for example by eliminating barriers to participate in more rigorous academic opportunities and encouraging them to take advantage of these options. Providing opportunities for students to take upper level courses was central to encouraging student engagement, learning, and interest in higher education.

Additionally, opportunities like PSEO and career oriented education provided exposure to higher education and career opportunities. Specifically, schools noted success in providing opportunities for a wide range of students to take AP courses or participate in PSEO- in successful programs, these opportunities were not reserved for the best performing students, but made available for all students. School staff actively encouraged all students to take advantage of these opportunities, and even targeted Latino students for enrollment in these programs.

PSEO was highly praised by several schools. The exposure to higher education was seen as a motivating force for students to pursue a path towards higher education while immediately helping them begin the adjustment to the demands of college. It also has practical financial advantages and can give low income students a head start on the higher education pathway, thus lowering overall financial costs and making diploma attainment more feasible. Multiple schools even offered examples of students who had completed an Associate's Degree through PSEO during high school. One school staff member emphasized the financial benefit of PSEO to students and their families, and encouraged them to take advantage of these opportunities. PSEO has proven to be especially helpful for undocumented students to pursue education beyond high school, allowing them to avoid administrative and financial barriers and also motivating them to excel in high school.

Interviewees stressed that solely making these programs available is insufficient. Educators and school staff must also provide support and encouragement and reduce the barriers that prevent Latino students from taking advantage of these programs. As one ELL program coordinator stated,

> *High expectations on their own, without some awareness and without some active targeting, is asking for somebody to fit into a box that is what we're used to. And, you know, it's not so simple I realize that, but it can't just be one or the other.*

Research supports the benefits of providing rigorous and upper level coursework for Latino students through rigorous coursework, PSEO, and AP programs. In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) published a report on successful models for Latino student achievement. Through this research they highlighted the importance of learning through guidance, practice and experience. The final report asserted the importance of complex teaching strategies that can meet the needs of diverse classrooms by highlighting effective and flexible program models. With collaborate learning and teaching at the center, DOE addressed the ways in which the classroom can be a place that can link education with students' everyday experiences. Some of these models included Joint Productive Activities, reading and language development embedded in the curriculum, challenging expectations, and instructional conversations. Reeves also found that 90/90/90 schools focused on the core subjects of reading, writing, and math and placed an emphasis on informative and narrative writing in assessments.

Additionally, the IBM report highlighted the need to provide opportunities for students to gain experience and cultivate interest in STEM subjects. They noted the importance of providing rigorous academic opportunities for Latino students rather than solely focusing on language and remedial skills, and they emphasized that, "Our educational accountability structure focuses resources on getting students to meet minimum performance benchmarks, to the detriment of preparing them for college (p. 7)."

Policy Implications

As with the previous theme of post-secondary exposure, policies that support programs like PSEO and connections to higher education academic options are essential to ensuring an academically rigorous high school environment. AP courses are another way to provide this. Most importantly, it is insufficient to solely make these opportunities available to students without ensuring that they are able to fully take advantage of them. These two themes- academic rigor and exposure- are connected through the previous themes of individual attention and motivation. Rigorous academic opportunities and curriculum must be made available to all students, and must be supported through understanding each student's own goals and needs. In order to achieve this, opportunities should be made available for all students alongside strong practices of data utilization, knowledgeable and compassionate counselors, and supportive curriculum, programs, and staff within schools.

Valuing Culture

Recognition of, and placing value on Latino students' culture is essential to engaging them in school and ensuring their needs are met. When students feel their culture is represented and included, they more easily connect school achievement with future personal success and are more engaged in their education.

Addressing the language needs of ELL (English Language Learner) students is one of the main areas where schools are challenged to support students both academically and culturally. Some of the ways schools have successfully supported students' language needs are through hiring bilingual teachers and other staff members, dual-language instruction, utilizing interpreters, and providing resources and educational materials in Spanish (including Spanish language materials in the school library). School staff also highlighted their dual language and heritage Spanish programs. Interviewees uniformly supported curriculum that encourages native languages, emphasizing the importance of showing students that their language abilities are not problems to be fixed, but assets and skills to be developed and valued. One ELL teacher stated that,

> *Half of my Spanish classes are Latino kids, and I have some people say, 'They already know Spanish, why do they take it?' And I look at them, 'you already know English, why are you sitting in English 7, why are you in English 12?' And I tell them right up front, 'you are fluent in Spanish-' and many can speak and understand, some can read and write, but not as many… so I tell them, 'You may know how to say things at home, you may use different slang words at home. When you're here we're going to focus on your academic Spanish.'*

The importance of hiring Latino teachers and administrators cannot be underscored enough. Native speakers and those knowledgeable in students' cultures can more effectively communicate with and understand students and families, and they also serve as positive role models for students. Program leaders, staff, and students all highlighted the importance of Latino staff in connecting

with students and helping them bridge cultural differences- both language and otherwise. One school staff member reflected that,

> *[Our ELL teacher] has life experiences that he can use, and he can be a huge role model for these kids. He's real, it's like he did it. I came from I would say, low-income family, first-generation college, I can speak to that piece of it, but I'm not Latino, Latina, so I think that's very important. But I do see how kids light up when someone of color even, walks up as a career speaker. It's totally different than, you know, a White man.*

Several interviewees discussed the importance of their programs as the first step of what they hoped would be a positive cycle for Latino students in their schools. As Latinos graduate they provide positive role models for other students. Several program leaders expressed hope that these students would later return to the school as teachers and staff members to offer more positive examples for Latino students. Some programs were already seeing some of these positive effects play out. As an example, one of the youth interviewed discussed how, due to his success in school, he now supports his younger sister by being a positive role model and offering her encouragement.

While bilingual staff is essential, however, they cannot be the sole personnel responsible for communicating with Spanish-speaking students and families. Experts and program leaders highlight that bilingual and bicultural staff should be used as a resource, but non-Latino staff must also build relationships with students and families. In many schools the underrepresentation of Latino staff is a reality and schools rely on encouraging teachers to build relationships with all students and their families.

The literature on this topic discusses these issues extensively. First, incorporating the Spanish language in teaching can greatly improve Latino students' understanding of material. Research shows that providing instruction and resources in a student's first language can significantly improve their learning and absorption. Students who are literate and academically proficient in their first language acquire English language skills more rapidly and do better in other subjects (IBM Corporation , 2008; Lewis, 2004; Murillo, Villenas, Munoz, Martinez, & Machado-Casas, 2010; Rosario & Rosario, 2008, Sattin-Bajaj & Suárez-Orozco; Soltero, 2008; Violand-Sanchez & Hainer-Violand, 2006). Having bilingual staff available in classrooms while ELL students attend mainstream classes is also widely cited as an effective strategy for helping Latino students advance more quickly. This allows them to be challenged and advance academically, providing support in their native language that helps them understand academic material while also encouraging advancement in their native language (Rosario & Rosario, 2008; Sattin-Bajaj & Suárez-Orozco; Soltero, 2008).

Soltero (2008) highlights 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).

Providing culturally relevant curriculum is another central component of creating a culturally responsive and supportive education (Rosario & Rosario, 2008, IBM Corporation, 2008). It includes incorporating culturally-relevant teaching materials, as well as topics and issues that directly connect to students' life experiences (Soltero, 2008). Rosario and Rosario also note that the positive effects of incorporating a student's culture applies not only to language, but to home culture and values: immigrant children who identify with their home culture "benefit from their families' values of hard work and educational achievement and perform better in school (p. 51)."

"Critical pedagogy" and "social justice content" are the second and third elements of Cammarota and Romero's critically compassionate intellectualism (the first being the aforementioned authentic caring). Critical pedagogy involves students as active members in their education by utilizing students' own knowledge and experience as valuable contributions to subject matter. Social justice curriculum focuses on "reaching content that directly counters racism and racist stereotypes through epistemological contextualization of the students' social, economic, and cultural realities (p. 22)." These two components allow students to become active participants in their education and directly relate educational material to their lives. Furthermore, Cammarota and Romero state that social justice educational content is essential for facilitating authentic caring by providing meaningful experience-based subject matter for students and their teachers to discuss. The three facets of critically compassionate intellectualism- critical pedagogy, social justice content, and authentic relationships- support one another to create an engaging and supportive educational environment for Latino students. Solorzano and Yosso (2002), Gutstein (2009), and Rodriguez all support these assertions with similar research on social justice curricula.

The Social Justice Education Project (SJEP) in Tucson, Arizona, provides one example of a program that has successfully implemented a social justice curriculum. The project emerged from a partnership between professors from the university of Arizona and teachers from the high school to help low-income Latino students fulfill their social science requirement through a socially relevant curriculum that allows students to focus their education on social justice issues related to their own lived experiences (Cammarota, 2007). In 2000, the school had the lowest ranking standardized test scores among public school in Tucson (Tucson United School District, 2000). Although many students in the first cohort were labeled "at risk" youth, they excelled with the coursework and ultimately graduated. The curriculum behind SJEP teaches Chicano Studies, Critical Social Theory, and participatory action research along with state requirements for U.S. History and Government. This advanced-level curriculum allowed students to think proactively about their education and ways to reach their future academic goals and dreams. Students that have gone through the program have talked about the importance of building pride and self-esteem in their success and insisted that the program's ability to use Latino culture as an asset within the classroom was pivotal in encouraging them to stay in school. Having been granted opportunities to reflect on their social realities, SJEP students felt encouraged to strive for a better future. SJEP demonstrates how an

experimental social science curriculum can positively influence Latino students' perspective of their potential to graduate high school.

Research also highlights the importance of culturally sensitive relationships between teachers and their students, and their correlation with decreased dropout rates (Anderson, 2004). Strong role models within their school environment often improve Latino students' own self-perception and academic achievement. In order to foster positive and caring relationships with their Latino students, teachers must be willing to recognize the pressures and challenges their students face both within and outside of the classroom (Sosa, T., & Gomez, K., 2012). Rosario notes the importance of cultural relevancy for students' self-esteem and motivation: "They need to know other students and adults who look like themselves and experience the strengths and richness of their heritage (p. 5)." He also notes the role of developing student leadership in creating positive experiences in an environment that lacks rich examples of their cultural heritage. By fostering leadership capacity, students can represent themselves and their culture to the school and act as role models for each other.

These strategies take an asset-based approach to incorporating Latino students' cultures in their education. This approach recognizes cultural diversity, not as "problems" or "barriers" to be addressed but as central to students' processes of learning and integral to the educational environment (Brown & Sauto-Manning, 2007; Rodriguez and Morrobel, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Violand-Sanchez & Hainer-Violand, 2006). Rodriguez and Morrobel focus on culture, ethnicity, and race as "critical dimensions of growth and development, underlying the development of identity, belief, cognition, and social interactions (p. 109)," and state that "The basic goal is to foster developmentally appropriate environments that embrace the culturally unique strengths of Latino youths in ways to enhance their ability to take advantage of the assets they have (p. 112)."

Monzo & Rueda (2001) conducted a study that considered the sociocultural techniques of Latino paraeducators and teachers working with Latino students and other students of color. They found trust between Latino students and educators to be a central component of their ability to succeed. Both teachers and paraeducators felt that establishing this sense of trust "was fostered by their shared language and culture and by getting to know students and interacting with them informally" (pp. 450). Paraeducators that worked almost exclusively with students in smaller groups found that this learning environment fostered a more relaxed mode of instruction centered on collaborative learning. The Latino teachers participating in the study perceived themselves as role models and noted that their college education was an inspiration to several of their Latino students. One teacher shared how she instilled in her students the belief that college was within their grasp:

> I focus on that a lot with my curriculum, making it clear and having them understand, both boys and girls, that nowadays you can do whatever you want no matter what your gender is. Maybe by them seeing that I'm female and that I'm a Latina and I went through college and I graduated, they can pick up on that. I think it's the same for boys 'cause we're all Latinos (p. 464).

This study is one of many that have demonstrated the importance for Latino students to have Latino role models within their schools. It highlights the ways language, culture, and community can be used to strengthen pedagogical and personal approaches to teaching Latino students.

Though a bilingual and bicultural staff is essential in building understanding and trust with students, and providing positive role models, all teachers have a responsibility to address their own biases and build cultural competency when working with Latino students. As noted, many schools face shortages in qualified Latino teachers, and the majority of teachers in Minnesota are White. Authors find that most teachers and administrators have an insufficient understanding of the factors that impact the education of Latinos, immigrants, and ELL students (Rosario & Rosario, 2008; Solero, 2008). Training in cultural competency, both culturally-specific material and strategies on working with students from a variety of backgrounds is important for all teachers (Lewis, 2004; Rosario J. R., 2006; Sattin-Bajaj & Suárez-Orozco; Soltero, 2008). Most importantly, authors stress that training should be ongoing and should not be limited to a single cultural competency class during a teacher's education or a one-time cultural training for staff. It should also include the nuances of working with diverse youth, including information specific to ethnic culture, working with urban youth, youth from lower socioeconomic statuses, migrant youth, and youth from cultures outside the dominant (White, middle-class) school culture (Rosario J. R., 2006).

Policy Implications

Creating a school environment that values students' cultures has several clear policy implications. First, policy should support asset-based ELL (English Language Learner) education that supports English language acquisition while also enhancing the native language skills of ELL students. This includes programs like heritage language classes, dual-language and bilingual classes, and providing supplementary materials in students' native languages. ELL programs that focus solely on English language acquisition are both inefficient and counterproductive for a globalized society and economy. Additionally, the 5 year cap on funding for ELL students burdens schools and goes against the findings of extensive research on language acquisition and documented best practices in ELL Education. This policy should be reexamined with best practices in mind.

Second, policies should be implemented to create more opportunities for Latino staff, especially teachers. This can be accomplished through funding and licensure requirements.

Third, while incorporating more Latino staff in schools is critical, cultural competency is necessary for all teachers. Teacher training programs and professional development opportunities should place an emphasis on developing cultural competency, rather than focusing solely on curriculum and teaching techniques. Most importantly, these efforts must be ongoing and comprehensive, incorporating an array of topics related to working with diverse youth.

Fourth, curriculum and educational materials must incorporate the lived experiences of Latino youth. This includes incorporating information specific to the Latino culture, as well as information that youth can connect to their lives more broadly.

Ensuring Culturally-Appropriate Opportunities for Family Involvement

As when working with youth, building relationships with families is central to encouraging involvement in their children's education. This is important for teachers as well as administrators, program leaders, and other school staff; several principals cited their own connection to families as essential in supporting Latino students' education. Interviewees highlighted the importance of understanding families' cultures and traditions, as well as their individual family situations. Interviewees noted the importance of taking the steps required to connect with families, including visiting their homes and using interpreters to address language barriers. One staff member also discussed using an interpreter to address language barriers and also to serve as a cultural interpreter to help her understand issues that may be related to a family's culture.

Family support has an especially strong potential for fostering academic success for Latino students. Educators and program leaders cite a strong family culture as one of the most influential aspects of the Latino culture supporting students; students themselves said that their families are the facet of their culture that made them most proud. Although some students sacrificed their educational commitments to fulfill family responsibilities, they also highlighted that they strove to excel in their education in order to make their families proud and to be able to better support them in the future, as the following quotes demonstrate.

> *Well, my family. I want to make them proud. 'Cause none of them have gone to college… I realize if I stay here and I get a scholarship or something, I could go for two, three years, four years, and make my family proud. So that's one of my big goals. Going to college and making my family proud.*

> *My parents pushed me a lot… they knew that I was struggling… but it was like really, moral support, because from their side, they couldn't really give me any educational support because they didn't finish elementary, or middle school, or high school. So they knew that it was up to me to, like, make them proud, so they really pushed me hard. And then the community, my family goes to church, so the church would always, like, support me as well. Like, they'd pray for me or just be like, 'You know you can do it,' or like, 'make your parents proud,' or 'make the community proud,' 'show that you're not just like any other Latino here in town,' 'show you can do it.' So, I don't know, I guess they got to me and I made it. Graduated.*

Rather than focusing on the ways family commitments and expectations create a barrier for Latino students, educational professionals and programs can harness family strengths as an asset that supports education for Latino students.

Providing continuous support for families and addressing their needs can be extremely helpful in providing an environment where families feel included in their children's education. Some strategies include providing language support through interpreters or English language classes for parents, and addressing practical concerns like transportation or child care. Two program leaders also discussed creating partnerships with local employers to ensure parents had the opportunity to learn about the school and attend conferences.

One district ELL Coordinator stressed that,

> *I think the pushback you get on [family engagement] is 'Well, they don't come,' you know, 'We have these meetings and they don't come.' And that's not enough. They will come if you make it happen.*

In addition to addressing practical considerations like language barriers or time constraints, one of the most important and influential strategies for garnering parent involvement is teaching families to navigate the school system. Program leaders provided information to parents on requirements and expectations for them and their children. They focused on the importance of ensuring this information was received and understood- simply providing information, even in translated documents was insufficient. Programs that successfully engaged parents made sure to communicate directly with parents or provide alternative opportunities for them to obtain information. Family liaisons, especially those who are themselves Latino, were essential to making connections between the school and families. Additionally, some program leaders discussed reaching out to faith communities and churches to connect with families.

Not only is it important to teach parents about their children's current school system, but several successful programs provided information and guidance in helping parents navigate the higher education system- particularly the college application and financial aid processes. In some schools family liaisons and counselors provided this on an individual basis. Other schools had more structured comprehensive programs that provided this information to parents. For example, one school hosted a parent engagement program that was facilitated by parent leaders and focused on a variety of school-related topics throughout the school year, including an intensive focus on college application, financial aid, and academic requirements at the beginning of the school year. This program provided parents with topical knowledge, while fostering leadership skills and a connection to the school. One of the coordinators of this program noted the importance of encouraging parents to take an active role:

> *Giving them power to control a lot of this programming. To organize, coordinate, talk a lot about the topics that we're going to cover, to involve people that they know who they think would be good, and to make it more of a collaborative effort rather than top down from the school [saying], "Here's what's going on." But rather bring them in, bring their families in and have them run the program as much if not more than what the school is doing. That's been really effective [at getting them to be engaged].*

Multiple interviewees stressed the effectiveness of getting to know parents by visiting their homes or community events. They felt that reaching out to them outside of school was essential to building trusting relationships. Others noted the importance of simply creating a welcoming environment for parents. Some schools had success with socially or culturally focused school-sponsored events like Cinco de Mayo parties and potlucks.

Many of these strategies were highlighted in the literature on successful educational approaches for Latino students and best practices. Rosario and Rosario discuss the importance of building personal relationships with parents and making efforts to understand both their cultures and

individual family situations. Authors also highlight the value of addressing practical considerations such as transportation and childcare for parents visiting the school (Rosario & Rosario, 2008). Several authors highlight the importance of the school creating a welcoming environment by dedicating a significant portion of the school's budget to family engagement (Sattin-Bajaj & Suárez-Orozco; Soltero, 2008). Sattin-Bajaj and Suárez-Orozco point out that,

> There are a host of possible avenues to improve communication and collaboration between immigrant parents and their children's schools. The most critical step is recognition by the school and the district that ongoing efforts to foster relationships with parents are worthwhile and valuable, even if this requires persistence, patience, and additional human and financial capital (p. 19).

Rosario notes that,

> Latino family involvement in their children's education may be different from those of traditional American families; but they are nonetheless valuable and should be respected and considered when planning parent/family involvement programs. Although they do not participate in their children's school in traditional ways, Latino parents are very involved in their children's education lives. Educators must identify new ways to involve Latino families in their children's education while respecting and validating their culture and values (p. 5).

He also emphasizes the importance of facilitating resources to help parents navigate the school system and addressing specific concerns of Latino parents regarding anxiety towards their children's participation in post-secondary education.

A supportive family environment and positive engagement in a child's education is also essential from a development perspective. Rodrigues and Morrobel note that personal identity and development for Latinos are highly influenced by family as compared to middle-class White students.

Many authors also highlight the importance of providing families with information on navigating the school system. This applies to students' current school system, but it is also important to facilitate processes involved in application and entrance to higher education (Gonzales, 2007; Gonzales, 2010). Gonzales highlights the importance of providing information specifically for undocumented students- providing clear information to students and their families about students' ability to apply for and attend college and the path to do so (Gonzales, 2010).

Rosario and Rosario summarize a sentiment central to interviewees' discussions of parent involvement:

> 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 (p. 33).

Policy Implications

As when working with students, the relationships and personal connections required to successfully take advantage of family engagement cannot be legislated. However, there are two key areas with implications for the role of policy in supporting family engagement. First, family and cultural liaisons are in many cases the staff members most able and appropriate to carry out this work. Multiple interviewees expressed frustration with decreased funding for liaisons. In order to successfully reach out to families, schools must both be able to obtain funding for liaisons and make a commitment to maintaining liaisons on staff.

Second, school efforts and programs that reach out to families to bridge the barriers that prevent them from being involved must be supported. This includes programs that make families feel welcome in the school, teach them how to navigate the school system, and utilize alternative approaches to ensure their participations. Again funding for these programs is an essential component.

Partnerships, Collaboration, and Community Involvement

The final strategy highlighted by interviewees includes utilizing partnerships and collaborations in the school's community to support students' educations. This includes specific partnerships and engaging the community as a whole in the education of all students. Successful programs utilize the resources in their communities, for example universities and colleges or major employers. One school, for example, is located in a city with two universities, a community college, and "a highly educated population." A program in the school created specifically to encourage higher education participation for nontraditional students relied on strong networks with these institutions to provide opportunities for students. Several schools partnered with universities and colleges to provide tutors. Two other schools with many students whose families shared a common employer collaborated with those companies to host parent conferences and provide information to parents. Several participants also highlighted the benefits of working with an Integration Collaborative, a region-wide program that aims to improve graduation rates and educational outcomes through community collaboration. It includes 14 communities and focuses on community outreach, cultural recognition, and addressing the health, social, and economic needs of families.

Several of the program leaders we spoke to recognized the importance of a holistic approach to education and discussed the role of the entire community in education. Education is not isolated in the school, but requires community and family support. Likewise, interviewees recognized that education requires the school to address student and family needs beyond instruction and information. One interviewee reflected that,

> *Schools can be awesome, but if the students have to move cause their families can't afford the place that they live, and they can in the next district, then so much for us being able to work with that student or that family. So I know that we exist within a very broad structure of services toward our community success.*

Some schools provided opportunities for parents to access educational resources such as English language classes for adults or college visits. These programs both engaged parents in their children's education and provided resources for parents themselves. This approach also incorporated building support from local businesses, organizations, and faith communities. This ranged from developing relationships to provide services and educational opportunities to students, to providing resources to the school. In several schools, these community networks were central to building relationships with and reaching out to parents.

Rosario and Rosario focus extensively on the notion that, along with engaging families in students' education, community engagement also plays an important role in success for students:

> Community-centered approaches recast many of the educational issues facing Latinos as community-wide concerns that have implications for 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 (p. 32).

They discuss the effectiveness of the community school model for Latino students. In the community school model, schools are not only a place of learning but also a community center that can address student needs that extend beyond the classroom. They provide extended day, weekend, and summer educational programming; connect students and their families to health and social services; provide early childhood education; provide adult education and work closely with families; host and sponsor community wide events; and incorporate community service and project-based learning in school curriculum. Additionally this model addresses community-wide initiatives like economic development and the well-being of community members outside of the school. It recognizes that education is not limited to the classroom, but is intertwined with students' and families' lives and the communities they live in. Other authors also highlight the benefits of creating partnerships with community organizations that have a connection to the families of their students (Sattin-Bajaj & Suárez-Orozco).

The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), frequently lauded for its success with low-income students of color, embraces this concept. It began as a one-block pilot in the 1990s and since then has expanded to cover 17 blocks. Built upon the goal of creating a "tipping point" in the neighborhood that support's a child's academic achievement, HCZ fosters an environment filled with college-oriented peers and supportive adults. Its seven central programs incorporate early childhood education; elementary school; middle school; high school; college preparation and access; family and community health; and the Promise Academy Charter Schools. Although about 1,200 students go through the Promise Academy Charter Schools, the organization also supports children who either live in the zone or attend public school nearby. In addition to high achievements in their Early Childhood and Elementary programs, Promise Academy High School has been successful in

providing academic support that ensures their students reach high levels of achievement. In 2008, 93% of ninth graders passed the Algebra Regents exam, and in the 2010-2011 school year 90% of high school seniors were accepted to higher education institutions. These programs work together to ensure that HCZ builds networks of support that strengthen families to create positive change in their children's educational development and achievement. Within a larger nationwide context, HCZ has become a model of success that many similar organizations have followed. The Northside Achievement Zone in Minneapolis and the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood were both modeled after HCZ.

Another example, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) in Chicago, employs a similar but less intense approach and has been greatly successful in supporting Latino educational attainment in the neighborhood's schools. The majority of residents of Logan Square are Latino and 96% of families are low-income. The Parent Mentor program was founded in 1995 when LSNA convinced schools to let parents volunteer in the classroom. The education coordinator for the program describes it as "a place for them to be able to explore themselves and realize they can do things they think they can't." After seventeen years, LSNA's Parent Mentor Program has graduated more than 1,300 parents and become a nationally recognized parent engagement model that builds deep and lasting relationships between students, teachers, and parents. Through this program, parent mentors provide much needed support for teachers by helping connect them to the culture of the community. The intensive parent training that mentors undergo transforms them into strong community assets and resources while offering them a pathway to bilingual teaching or other careers. LSNA's parent mentor initiative serves as a powerful example of ways in which schools can draw on the strengths of families to enhance their students' education. Through this model we see schools becoming vibrant centers of community where families can begin to use the school as a place to support their students' achievement as well as access adult education classes and multiple services.

The Search Institute's developmental principles also focus heavily on support from the community. Not only do students need strong, positive connections with adults in the school and family members, but individual connections with members of the community and a supportive community environment overall.

Additionally, many communities are partnering with the private sector to support student success. Participants at the IBM STEM conference, for example, emphasized the importance of the corporate or private sector in supporting education for Latino students through exposure to employment opportunities, development of teachers, and financial support. Conference participants also suggested cultivating partnerships with Latin American universities to connect students with career and academic opportunities, thus expanding the notions of "community" and "partnership" even further. Rosario also highlights educational programs that provide internship opportunities and career exposure to students through partnerships with the business community.

Policy Implications

The role of policy in this area is to support schools' efforts to connect with communities, build partnerships, and create collaborations. Holistic approaches to education should be supported and encouraged. This is another area where funding is important. Many of the programs that appeared to be achieving success with; several interviewees expressed concern about possible cuts in funding for these programs. Beyond funding, policies can also be implemented to encourage these efforts for all schools. At the legislative level, K-12 education policy and funding cannot focus solely on core, school-based academics, but must incorporate these important aspects of education that are central to utilizing resources in the community to support students in multiple ways. There is also a role for school-based policy. Schools must recognize the value of a holistic approach to education and implement policies and practices that utilize the resources and partnerships available in their communities.

Summary of Policy Implications

The following table (also available in Appendix 2) summarizes the policy implications that emerged from the analysis of our original and secondary research. These implications fall into three key areas: policy and legislature, school districts and schools, and teacher and staff training. Action at all three levels is essential to creating a supportive educational environment for Latino students, as these three areas interact in building a more comprehensive and successful strategy towards reducing the achievement gap and improving educational attainment among Latino students.

- First, the legislative and policy initiatives provide essential structure and oversight to programs. Rather than focusing narrowly on broad academic accountability measures and procedures that have little meaning to schools, policy should encourage strategies that foster individual and intensive support for students. This includes supporting, encouraging, and funding programs that utilize the strategies outlined in this report.
- Second, schools and districts play a first-hand role in shaping the school environment for students. Schools must commit to implementing programs that address student needs in a comprehensive way that not only focuses on quality academic support but recognizes the diverse individual needs of students.
- Finally, teacher education should not only focus on pedagogical strategies, but should include intensive training in practices that foster culturally meaningful connections with students. This includes Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD programs, as well as continuous professional development once they are in working with youth.

Table 3: Policy Implications

	Topic Area	Strategy	Elements of Program Success
Policy + Legislation	Academics	Reexamine 5-year ELL funding cap	Valuing culture
	Academics	Craft legislation that supports ELL and native language retention	Valuing culture
	Academics	Support and extend policies for PSEO and AP classes.	Motivation, Exposure, Rigor
	Career Readiness	Craft educational requirements to value career-oriented and vocational programs	Motivation, Exposure, Rigor
	Funding	Ensure funding for ELL beyond 5 years	Valuing culture
	Funding	Ensure funding for community liaisons and counselors	Valuing culture, Family involvement
	Funding	Provide incentives for hiring qualified Latino educators	Valuing culture, Individual attention
	Funding	Support efforts to create holistic approaches involving community in education	Collaboration
	Student Support	Pass the state level Dream Act.	Motivation, exposure
	Teachers/ Staff	Implement policies to support more Latino educators	Valuing culture, Individual attention
	Testing	Craft testing and accountability measures focused on meaningful assessments, not summative measures	Individual attention

	Topic Area	Strategy	
School + District-Based Policy	Academics	Develop culture of high expectations for all students, dispel negative stereotypes of Latino students	Rigor
	Academics	Implement programs that allow students to connect with higher education institutions	Motivation, Exposure
	Academics	Provide opportunities for students to participate in academically rigorous programs (PSEO + AP)	Exposure, Rigor
	Academics	Implement ELL programs that support both English acquisition and native language retention	Valuing culture
	Academics	Ensure curricula encourages students to draw connections between class material and future goals	Motivation, Exposure
	Career Readiness	Ensure counselors help students identify goals and the path to goal attainment	Individual attention
	Community	Utilize community assets	Collaboration
	Parents/ Families	Provide accessible opportunities for parents to learn about school system and requirements	Family involvement
	Parents/ Families	Implement programs addressing needs of students and families beyond the classroom	Collaboration
	Teachers/ Staff	Encourage support staff to connect with students and families	Family involvement
	Teachers/ Staff	Provide opportunities for staff to collaborate/discuss successful approaches and review student data	Individual attention
	Teachers/ Staff	Provide on-going professional development including cultural competency, developing personal connections	Individual attention, Valuing culture
	Teachers/ Staff	Commit to maintaining qualified staff of liaisons and counselors	Individual attention, Valuing culture
	Teachers/ Staff	Treat liaisons and counselors like other educators-- involve them in teacher collaboration and provide same professional development	Individual attention
	Testing	Develop strategies to assess and review individual student progress	Individual attention
Teacher + Support Staff Training	Student Support	Focus on building positive and encouraging relationships with each student	Individual attention
	Parents/ Families	Make efforts to reach out to families	Family involvement
	Teachers/ Staff	Learn how to work with diverse youth-- low income, immigrant, high mobility populations, for example	Valuing culture
	Teachers/ Staff	Develop cultural competency	Valuing culture
	Teachers/ Staff	Create opportunities to examine personal stereotypes, biases, and perceptions of social power structures	Valuing culture

Next Steps

This research will serve as the basis for a second phase pilot project, focusing on developing and implementing a pilot program in 2013. This pilot project will utilize the findings of Phase 1 research to develop a program with the characteristics found to be successful in other schools in Minnesota. This project will include implementation of the program, as well as a comparison study to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Research will include an evaluation of program implementation and outcomes as well as an in-depth assessment of other factors contributing to success among Latinos in the school, such as the socioeconomic environment of the communities in which the school is located, family dynamics, and other external factors. It will also include a thorough analysis of current programming and incorporation of the programmatic factors identified in this research to have success with Latino students. One of the schools in this pilot initiative will be located in the Saint Paul Public School District. Background research will include a more thorough analysis of Saint Paul Public School high schools and the factors that contribute to success among Latino students within this large, urban district.

As part of this project, the team is developing recommendations to use these findings as a guide for educational policy. It is also currently developing a larger strategic communications plan to disseminate this information more broadly to stakeholders in this area.

Conclusion

The gap in educational achievement between White and Latino students is bigger in Minnesota than in any other state. Still, opportunities abound to overcome barriers and provide larger reforms to support student achievement. This report finds that the programs that have demonstrated effectiveness in closing the achievement gap and supporting Latino student development are embracing program elements that align with a wealth of previous research. While each of these principles reflects program elements that benefit all students, they interact in a way that particularly benefits Latino students. These common factors were found to be successful in multiple, in some cases all, schools that were included in the study:

1. Building strong relationships between staff and students and providing individual attention to each student;
2. Fostering motivation in students by helping them identify and achieve their own goals, and offering encouragement;
3. Providing exposure to career and higher education opportunities;
4. Creating an environment of high expectations, academic rigor, and promoting upper level academic opportunities;
5. Recognizing and placing value on students' cultural identities and needs;
6. Encouraging family involvement by building mutually respectful relationships and addressing the needs of parents and families;
7. Utilizing partnerships, collaboration, and community involvement to engage students.

The findings reported in this document echo widely documented educational strategies, such as the importance of personal connections, cultural competency, and high expectations; they may come as no surprise to those who have studied educational programs.

Although the findings of this report may appear limited due to the project's scale, each of the identified themes is supported by previous research and findings on best practices. Multiple studies and authors support these conclusions. Alone, these interviews offer meaningful anecdotal insights into the unique experiences of students in Minnesota high schools; in conjunction with the wealth of data, previous research, best practices, and theory, they present a strong case for reexamining current educational policy in the state. These findings have implications for policy in three key areas- policy and legislature, school districts and schools, and teacher and staff training as outlined in Table 3 and Appendix 2.

Minnesota needs a well-educated, highly skilled, and culturally competent workforce. Latino students have a wealth of cultural and language assets that can be better utilized to benefit the state. By incorporating the findings of this report in our efforts to eliminate education gaps, we can build an economy that is stable and robust, ready to compete in the 21st century.

Appendix 1: School Site Profiles

Statewide Picture

Statewide, Latinos represented 7.1% of students in the 2011-2012 school year, the third largest ethnic group, and second largest minority group; Whites represented 73.75% of students, Blacks 10.2%, Asians 6.7%, and American Indians 2.2%. 7.8% of all students were English Learners and 37.3% qualified for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch. Since 2005-2006, the state has become considerably more diverse. In 2006 78.3% of students were White, 8.6% were Black, 5.7% were Asian, 5.3% were Latino, and 2.1% were American Indian. 30.4 qualified for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch and 7.1% were English learners. These trends are reflected throughout the schools included in this project.

The statewide graduation rate in 2012 was 76.9% for all students and 50.5% for Latinos. The gap between Latino and White students was 33 percentage points. Dropout rates were 4.8% statewide and 13.5% for Latinos, with a 10.2 percentage point gap between Latino and White students.

Table 4: Graduation and Dropout Rate Comparison

	Graduation Rate			Dropout Rate		
	All Students	**Latino**	**White**	**All Students**	**Latino**	**White**
Statewide	**76.9%**	**50.5%**	**83.5%**	**4.8%**	**13.5%**	**3.30%**
Columbia Heights	81.6%	70.7%	86.5%	3.2%	4.9%	3.4%
Northfield	91%	--	91.9%	0.3%	--	--
Sleepy Eye	78.4%	--	--	5.9%	--	--
Willmar	79.8%	55%	92.4%	7.4%	20%	1.3%
Worthington	79.2%	62.5%	93.2%	5.2%	10.4%	--

Source: Minnesota Department of Education, 2012

Columbia Heights Senior High School

Columbia Heights Senior High School is located in Columbia Heights, MN, a northern Minneapolis suburb with 19,500 residents, 11.9% of which are Latino. In 2012 the Columbia Heights School District had 35.7% African American students, 29.5% White, 26% Latino, 5.2% Asian and Pacific Islander, and 3.7% American Indian students. The high school had very similar numbers: 38% African American, 29.5% White, 24% Latino, 4.5% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 4.1% American Indian. The school and district demographics have shifted since 2005 when Whites represented 52.1% of students, African Americans 28.8%, Latinos 10.7%, Asian Americans 10.7%, and American Indians represented 6.1% of students in the high school.

Columbia Heights Senior High had the second highest graduation rate for Latinos in Minnesota in 2011- 70.7%, significantly above the state average of 50%. The school's overall graduation rate was 81.6%. Additionally the gap between Latino and White students is half that of the statewide average- 15.8 percentage points compared to 33, and the gap between the graduation rate for Latinos and the graduation rate for all students was 10.8 percentage points compared to 26.3. Dropout rates at Columbia Heights were also more positive: 3.2% school-wide and only 4.9% for Latinos; the gap between dropout rates for Latino and White students was only 1.5 percentage points compared to a 10.2 percentage point state average gap. The number of Latino graduates has increased steadily from only 7 students in 2003 to 41 students in 2011, and since 2009 graduation rates have increased from 57.5% and dropout rates have decreased from 10%.

Hopkins Senior High School

Hopkins Senior High School is located in a western Minneapolis suburb. Hopkins has a total population of 17,600 and 7.9% of residents are Latino. In 2012, Hopkins Senior High had 69.6% White students, 18.9% African American, 5.8% Asian or Pacific Islander, 5.5% Latino, and .2% American Indian. The district was slightly more diverse, with a lower percentage of White students (62.8%) and higher percentages of all minority groups- Latinos represented 8% of students district-wide. The district has grown considerably more diverse since 2005 when more than 80% of students were White, and only 4% of students were Latino (12% were African American, 3% were Asian American). American Indian enrollment, however, has dropped from .6% in 2005.

Hopkins' graduation rate was 85.2% in 2011, more than 8 percentage points higher than the state average, and dropout rates were very low- only .9%, one of the lowest dropout rates on our list. Graduation and dropout rates for Latinos were unavailable due to insufficient numbers, but 31 Latinos graduated in 2011. Both Whites and Latinos at Hopkins had higher levels of proficiency than state averages on the MCA II test with the exception of Latino reading scores.

Hopkins has 2 notable programs to facilitate educational involvement for Latino parents. Hopkins PLUS (Parent Leadership Uniting our Schools or Padres Latinos UnidoS) focuses on Latino parents and holds meetings throughout the school year to educate and engage parents on a variety of topics. Meetings are held in Spanish and led by parent leaders, also members of the program. The Sí, Se Puede program also targets Latino parents and focuses on providing parents with information on higher education, including the college preparation, requirements, and the college application and financial aid processes.

Northfield Senior High School

Northfield, MN is located 35 miles south of the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul) and is home to 2 liberal arts universities as well as a community college. With about 20,000 residents in total, 8.4% of the population is Latino. While the large majority of students in the Northfield Public School District are White (85.3% in 2011), Latinos represent the largest non-White ethnic group with 10.7% of students, and the only other ethnic group with a significant percentage of students. This ratio was lower in the High School, which had 6.8% Latino students, and 89.3% White students. Latinos represented only 7.8% of students in the district and 4.4% of students in the high school in 2005-2006.

The overall graduation rate for Northfield Senior High was an impressive 91% in 2011, more than 14 percentage points higher than the state average. This has remained stable since 2008 and only fluctuated slightly between 2003 and 2008- the lowest rate being 86.7% in 2007, still nearly 12 percentage points above the state average. The dropout rate has remained below 2% since 2003, and decreased to only .3% in 2011, well below the state average and the lowest of the schools in this study. The number of Latino graduates has grown from only 6 graduating students in 2003 to 17 students in 2011. The number of overall and White graduates has remained relatively consistent. Both Whites and Latinos had higher levels of proficiency on MCA II test than their respective groups statewide, with the exception of Latino reading scores (51.7% compared to 52.7% proficiency). Additionally, the gap between White and Latino proficiency in science was more narrow in Northfield than the statewide average.

The TORCH (Tackling Obstacles and Raising College Hopes) program at Northfield Sr. High serves low income, youth of color, and aspiring first generation college-going youth. The program supports students though a variety of methods to improve the graduation and post-secondary participation rates of the students it serves. The program's activities include academic counseling; tutoring and homework help; assistance with college and financial aid preparation; leadership and community involvement activities; and support to families. Support is provided to each student individually based on their needs and goals. TORCH has contributed to impressive gains in graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment for the Latino students at Northfield. Since it began in 2005, the graduation rate for Latino students has increased from 36% to over 90% and the majority of TORCH students plan to attend a post-secondary education institution.

Sleepy Eye Secondary School

Sleepy Eye is located in Brown County 100 miles southwest of Minneapolis. While it is a small city with only 3,600 residents, 13% of the population is Latino. In the 2011-2012 school year, Latino students represented 31.9% of students enrolled in the Sleepy Eye Public School District, the only ethnic group of a significant size other that Whites (66.9%); Secondary school enrollment mirrored this with 34.4% Latino students and 64.2% White. 48.3% of students qualified for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch (51.7% in the district), and 2.4% were English Learners compared to 8.4% in the district as a whole. High school Latino enrollment has increased from 27.95% in 2005-2006, while district-wide Latino enrollment has remained steady, which indicates changing demographics in the district.

Sleepy Eye also has a record of impressive graduation rates. While the school's graduation rate for the 2010-2011 school year was 78.43%, previous years showed consistently high graduation rates. Between 2005 and 2010, graduation rates were between 87.8% and 92.6%, 13.5 to 17.8 percentage points higher than state averages for those years. In 2004, the graduation rate was 96.8%. Graduation rates for Latinos are unavailable, but the overall number of Latino graduates has increased steadily from 6 students in 2003 to 10 students in 2011 (2009 and 2010 both had 12 Latino graduates). This is in contrast to decreasing total number of graduates in the school, which fell from 74 graduates in 2003 to 51 students in 2011. The number of white graduates has also decreased from to 68 in 2003 to 38 in 2011. In 2011, Latino students accounted for 19% of all graduates and 8 out of 9 Latino seniors graduated.

While students at Sleepy Eye did not excel on the 2011 MCA II tests, there was a much narrower gap between White and Latino students compared to state averages. The gap between White and Latino math proficiency levels was only 16.4 percentage points compared to 33.2 statewide. While proficiency for Whites was 17.4 percentage points lower for math, 26.4 lower for science, and 19.2 lower for reading compared to statewide scores, proficiency for Latinos was only .6 percentage points lower that the statewide average for math (data for science and reading were not available).

Willmar Senior High School

Willmar, MN is located 100 miles west of the Twin Cities in Kandiyohi County. While it is a primarily rural and agricultural community, Willmar is the central urban area of the region and is home to 19,600 residents, 20.9% of whom are Latino. In the 2011-2012 school year, Latinos had the second highest enrollment in the Willmar Public School District, representing 30.2% of students; 60.2% were White, and 7.4% were African American. Willmar Senior High had 21.9% Latino students, 68.5% White students, and 7.5% Black students, with a total enrollment of 1,180. These numbers have increased slightly from a 27.2% Latinos in the district and 18.2% Latinos in the High School in 2005-2006.

In 2011, the school's graduation rate was 79.75%, slightly higher than the state average of 76.9%. The Latino graduation rate was 55%, compared to a 50.5% statewide average, and represents the 8th highest graduation rate for Latinos in the state for schools where data is available. Latino graduation rates were also high between 2006 and 2008, peaking at 58.5% in 2007, and as the principal noted "We are very proud of the gains we have made here, especially with the graduation rates of our Hispanic students. We have gone from a 15% graduation rate when our building opened in 1995 to a 77.8% graduation rate last year for Hispanic/Latino students." [6] Though proficiency scores on the MCA II test were on average lower than statewide averages for both Whites and Latinos, the gap between math proficiency scores for Latino and White students at Willmar was significantly narrower than the statewide average – by nearly 10 percentage points.

In addition to traditional ELL classes, Willmar hosts the SMART Club (Study More to Achieve Results Tomorrow), which serves many Latino students and is directed by a Latina Willmar Alum. The program, which is possible through the West Central Integration Collaborative, provides supplementary after-school education through individual counseling and group academic support. In addition to individual tutoring, upper level students, many of whom also participate in the SMART Club, are recruited to teach school curriculum to their peers. The club is open to all students, but has had particular success reaching out to struggling Latino students.

[6] Numbers vary based on different calculations. The percentages cited in this report are based on Minnesota Department of Education calculations of 4 year graduation rates.

Worthington Sr. High School

Worthington, MN is located in southwest Minnesota, a regional economic hub of a primarily rural community. Worthington has 12,800 residents, and a population that is over one third (35.4%) Latino. The Worthington Public School District has the highest percentage of Latino students in the state, with 43.7% Latinos in 2010-2011, and is one of the only districts where Latinos represent the largest demographic group. Whites represent 38% of students, Asians represent 12.5%, African Americans represent 5.5%, and American Indian students represent .3% of students in the district. In 2010-2011, Worthington Sr. High School has the fourth largest Latino population of all high schools in the state, with 33.8%. 46.2% were White, 14.5% were Asian, 5.4% were African American, and .1% was American Indian.

The overall graduation rate for Worthington Sr. High in 2011 was 79.2%, slightly above the state average of 76.9%. The graduation rate for Latinos was 62.5%, almost 12 percentage points above the state average for Latinos. While the gap between Latino and White graduation rates was over 30 percentage points, this is slightly narrower than the statewide gap of 33 percentage points, and the gap between Latinos and the school wide graduation rate was 16.7 percentage points compared to 26.3 percentage points statewide. Additionally, while the overall dropout rate for the school was above the state average, the dropout rate for Latinos at Worthington was 3.1 percentage points below the state average for Latinos, and was only 5.2 percentage points above the school average compared to an 8.7 percentage point statewide gap. In 2009, the graduation rate for Latinos was 69.8%, 26.4 percentage points above the state average that year.

The school follows a block schedule- four classes per day, which maximizes the amount of time that students spend in each class. The EL (English Language) program offers both traditional ELL instruction and dual language instruction in content areas. Worthington also offers two career preparation opportunities- Automotive Engine and Repair and Nursing- that incorporate higher education opportunities, training with professionals in the field, and provide students with college credit.

Appendix 2: Policy Implications

The following table summarizes the policy implications that emerged from the analysis of our original and secondary research. These implications fall into three key areas: policy and legislature, school districts and schools, and teacher and staff training. Action at all three levels is essential to creating a supportive educational environment for Latino students. First, legislative and policy initiatives provide essential structure and oversight to programs. Second, schools and districts play a first-hand role in shaping the school environment for students. Finally, teacher training should be more comprehensively focused on addressing the needs of Latino and other students of color; this is important for teacher training programs at colleges and universities, beyond the role of schools and districts.

	Topic Area	Strategy	Elements of Program Success
Policy + Legislation	Academics	Reexamine 5-year ELL funding cap	Valuing culture
	Academics	Craft legislation that supports ELL and native language retention	Valuing culture
	Academics	Support and extend policies for PSEO	Motivation, Exposure, Rigor
	Academics	Support and extend policies for AP classes	Motivation, Exposure, Rigor
	Career Readiness	Craft educational requirements to value career-oriented and vocational programs	Motivation, Exposure, Rigor
	Funding	Ensure funding for ELL beyond 5 years	Valuing culture
	Funding	Ensure funding for community liaisons and counselors	Valuing culture, Family involvement
	Funding	Provide incentives for hiring qualified Latino educators	Valuing culture, Individual attention
	Funding	Support efforts to create holistic approaches involving community in education	Collaboration
	Student Support	Consider state-level policies to supplement and facilitate Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals	Motivation, exposure
	Teachers/ Staff	Implement policies to support more Latino educators	Valuing culture, Individual attention
	Testing	Craft testing and accountability measures focused on meaningful assessments, not summative measures	Individual attention

	Topic Area	Strategy	
School + District-Based Policy	Academics	Develop culture of high expectations for all students, dispel negative stereotypes of Latino students	Rigor
	Academics	Implement programs that allow students to connect with higher education institutions	Motivation, Exposure
	Academics	Provide opportunities for students to participate in academically rigorous programs (PSEO + AP)	Exposure, Rigor
	Academics	Implement ELL programs that support both English acquisition and native language retention	
	Academics	Ensure curricula encourages students to draw connections between class material and future goals	Motivation, Exposure
	Career Readiness	Ensure counselors help students identify goals and the path to goal attainment	Individual attention
	Community	Utilize community assets	Collaboration
	Parents/ Families	Provide accessible opportunities for parents to learn about school system and requirements	Family involvement
	Parents/ Families	Implement programs addressing needs of students and families beyond the classroom	Collaboration
	Teachers/ Staff	Encourage support staff to connect with students and families	Family involvement
	Teachers/ Staff	Provide opportunities for staff to collaborate/discuss successful approaches and review student data	Individual attention
	Teachers/ Staff	Provide on-going professional development including cultural competency, developing personal connections	Individual attention, Valuing culture
	Teachers/ Staff	Commit to maintaining qualified staff of liaisons and counselors	Individual attention, Valuing culture
	Teachers/ Staff	Treat liaisons and counselors like other educators-- involve them in teacher collaboration and provide same professional development	Individual attention
	Testing	Develop strategies to assess and review individual student progress	Individual attention
Teacher + Support Staff Training	Student Support	Focus on building positive and encouraging relationships with each student	Individual attention
	Parents/ Families	Make efforts to reach out to families	Family involvement
	Teachers/ Staff	Learn how to work with diverse youth-- low income, immigrant, high mobility populations, for example	Valuing culture
	Teachers/ Staff	Develop cultural competency	Valuing culture
	Teachers/ Staff	Create opportunities to examine personal stereotypes, biases, and perceptions of social power structures	Valuing culture

Appendix 3: Literature Review

Educational Inequity

Addressing the Latino Achievement Gap

Minnesota's educational crisis reflects national trends of inequity in education. The attainment gap between students of color and their White classmates serves as a call for action. As highlighted in this report, for Minnesota to ensure its future success, educational systems need to serve the needs of all students. Scholars have addressed a wide range of components as lead causes of the educational gap Latino and students of color at large face. According to Contreras (2011), the primary factors that lead to this gap include unequal distribution of school and district resources, inequitable access to curriculum, lack of intervention and services for English learners, the barriers that emerge from living in low income households, and limited access to highly trained teachers. Considering these factors as intersectional enhances existing discourses on educational equity. The low-income levels of Latino students also reflect limited access to health care as well as lower levels of preschool enrollment (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Fully addressing the achievement gap reflected in high school students' test scores requires going all the way back to their primary education: differential access to curriculum and knowledge can be traced to uneven access to quality preschool children of color, which places students on an unequal trajectory from the start (Contreras, 2011). School poverty rates have also been traced to educational attainment and access. In 2008, studies reflected that 46% of Latino students attended high poverty elementary schools, where at least 50 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2005).

Implications of High-Stakes Testing for Latino Student

Educating Latino students in an era of high-stakes testing also requires a stronger emphasis on test preparation in order to graduate high school. More than half of U.S. states now require exit exams. Latino students have among the lowest passing rates on statewide assessment, and constrained resources available to students in high-poverty schools only accentuate already existing gaps in achievement. High-stakes testing then must be consistently addressed within conversations on education equity. Contreras (2011) questions the focus schools place on testing to evaluate student achievement and success:

What challenges are embedded in the current policy framework, and are they fostering an increase in the number of Latinos being 'left behind' or dropping out of school? [...] Do high-stakes tests address the issue of resource inequities? What approaches to assessment may be more beneficial to meeting the needs of Latino students? (pp. 54)

In many regards, high-stakes testing has been considered a primary tool for educational reform, yet research shows high-stakes testing to be one of the leading examples of uneven access to

education. Latino student achievement takes on increased importance in a time when all states are witnessing growth in its Latino population and closing the education gap is at the forefront of public discourse.

Contributing Factors to Education Inequity for Latinos

Previous research finds that the challenges Latino students face often stem from struggles at home and can include a family's financial situation, parents' work schedules, immigration status, and language barriers. Often, students also face challenges related to the structure of the school system and a disconnect between their culture and the dominant culture of schools in the United States. Many of the issues facing Latino students, and especially Latino immigrants, stem from financial difficulties. Soltero (2008) notes that, "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. Latino children face many challenges related to family income and structure, parental work patterns, educational attainment, English proficiency, and health insurance coverage (p. 14)." Barriers like inadequate health care, poor nutrition, transportation, and family responsibilities often stem from financial hardship and can significantly affect a student's education (Contreras, 2011; Lewis, 2004; Rosario J. R., 2006). Authors find that Latino students are more likely to enter school with significant disadvantages compared to their peers, for example, these factors can directly influence students' education through access to early childhood opportunities, placing them on an unequal trajectory from the start (Contreras, 2011; Rosario J. R., 2006). They have a significant influence on students' education, from their ability to complete assignments to their motivation in school. Other barriers stem from societal constraints such as cultural stereotypes or state and national policies. This section summarizes the main challenges that the literature has found Latino students to be facing, as well as the experiences of the educational professionals and students interviewed by our team for this project.

First, language is a common challenge for Latino students, both those who immigrate to the United States and those who grow up in immigrant communities. It is widely noted that English Language Learners (ELLs) struggle academically (Sattin-Bajaj & Suárez-Orozco). Language barriers create significant challenges particularly for students entering the United States in high school. Not only do they face more advanced academic requirements and more complex subject matter, they are often required to master the language before they are able to fully participate in school, which adds significant practical challenges to students' ability to graduate high school within four years (Sattin-Bajaj & Suárez-Orozco). Language can also have a significant effect on students' ability to perform well on standardized assessments. While it may only take several months to acquire conversational English skills, mastering academic language skills can take 7 years or more (Lewis, 2004; Soltero, 2008). This presents an additional policy barrier and challenge for schools: despite this widely-cited statistic, Minnesota only funds schools for 5 years of ELL education per student (Minnesota Department of Education, 2011).

These factors summarize the practical language barriers that stem from an ideological language barrier in the United States, where multilingualism, may be viewed as a liability rather than an asset (Sattin-Bajaj & Suárez-Orozco). Due to this ideology, native language skills are rarely promoted in schools, which require them to focus programming on English language acquisition rather than

bilingual or native language cultivation. Rather than supporting students' natural language skills through comprehensive ELL education, program leaders are required to implement programs that seek to push students out of ELL education as quickly as possible and students are required to meet basic standards that do not consider their unique needs and talents. This affects not only English language programming and the perception of others towards English learners, but students' own aspirations and self-perception (Lewis, 2004). This approach stands in stark contrast to recent research that underscores the significant advantage of speaking more than one language. For example, studies presented at last year's meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science found that bilingual children are better able to prioritize tasks than monolinguals and that multilingualism may help protect against age-related mental decline, such as Alzheimer and dementia. As cognitive neuroscientist Ellen Byalistok's studies on bilingualism have indicated, there are distinct differences in the ways in which bilinguals and monolinguals process language. Bilingual children, as young as 6 are able to identify illogical sentences even when they are grammatically correct, whereas monolinguals could not make the distinction (Dreifus, 2011).

A second related challenge is school systems' general lack of cultural fluency or inclusion. When youth do not see their own cultures and identities reflected in their school curriculum and environment, they may disengage from their education- their responses can range from a basic lack of interest in school, to hostility or lowered self-expectations (Schmidt, 2001). Not only does cultural content affect classroom learning, but students may also face barriers in understanding school rules and norms. Additionally, Latino teachers and administrators are underrepresented in schools, depriving Latino students of access to staff that could serve as language and cultural interpreters and positive role models. This can further alienate students from school (Soltero, 2008). Monzo & Rueda (2001) conducted a study that considered the sociocultural techniques of Latino paraeducators and teachers working with Latino students and other students of color. They found trust between Latino students and educators to be a central component of their ability to succeed. Both teachers and paraeducators felt that establishing this sense of trust "was fostered by their shared language and culture and by getting to know students and interacting with them informally" (pp. 450). Paraeducators that worked almost exclusively with students in smaller groups found that this learning environment fostered a more relaxed mode of instruction centered on collaborative learning. The Latino teachers participating in the study perceived themselves as role models and noted that their college education was an inspiration to several of their Latino students. One teacher shard how she instilled in her students the belief that college was within their grasp:

I focus on that a lot with my curriculum, making it clear and having them understand, both boys and girls, that nowadays you can do whatever you want no matter what your gender is. Maybe by them seeing that I'm female and that I'm a Latina and I went through college and I graduated, they can pick up on that. I think it's the same for boys 'cause we're all Latinos (pp.464).

This study is one of many that have demonstrated the importance for Latino students to have Latino role models within their schools. It highlights the ways language, culture, and community can be used to strengthen pedagogical and personal approaches to teaching Latino students.

Third, Latino students and parents generally have little understanding of the U.S. educational system and few tools to access or influence it. For example, despite Latino youths' optimism and motivation, they and their families often lack information about college, including admission requirements and financial aid options, which impact their ability to pursue higher education, and by extension their motivation in high school. If higher education seems unobtainable, they have little reason to strive for excellence in high school (Kao & Tienda, 1998).

A fourth commonly identified challenge is the cultural disconnect between parents and schools that makes it challenging for parents to identify the best options for engaging in their child's educational experience. "Parent involvement" is regularly cited as key to student success, and the lack thereof as a significant barrier. However, while Latino parents place high value on education and educational achievement for their children, they may lack the social, cultural, and financial means to fully support them (Lewis, 2004). Parents may not understand the schools' expectations for their children or their own involvement. Lee and Bowen (2006) found that involvement at school occurred more often for parents whose culture and lifestyle were more congruent with the school's culture. This includes not only ethnic culture, but the inconsistency between the school's culture and the culture of low-income families. Latino families in many cases face challenges as members of multiple disadvantaged communities, including immigrant, minority, and low-income. Additionally, despite a firm commitment to support their children's education, parents may face practical language barriers or time constraints that make it difficult to provide as much support as they would like. Cammarota and Romero (2006) state that "teachers and administrators often cite 'culture' and 'parents' as explanations for the failure of students of color," and that this ignores the larger societal factors that shape both the school and student experiences.

Current school culture has also failed to address the challenges Latino families face when their practical needs can impede students' ability to fulfill educational obligations. While families value education, urgent family needs often supersede youth's academic responsibilities. Latino families place high expectations on students to fulfill family obligations through financial support and involvement in household chores and responsibilities. Lopez (2009) found that foreign born Latino youth were more likely than native born to be supporting or helping to support a family either in the U.S. or in their country of origin. Additionally, parents' work commitments and their frequent need to juggle multiple jobs can result in work schedules that are incompatible with school events, such as parent-teacher conferences and family functions (*Wooley, 2009; Sosa 2012*).

High mobility due to family situation is another challenge for many Latino youth. The mobility of families employed as migrant workers in the agricultural sector primarily affects schools in rural agricultural communities; meanwhile, the mobility that confronts urban and suburban schools is generally due to families' economic circumstances and lack of stable housing. In both cases, students may start school late, move during the school year, and attend multiple schools; they can lose up to two weeks of school per move (Lewis, 2004). Not only do students lose instruction time, but when youth view their education as temporary and unstable, they may be less committed to school (Lewis, 2004).These factors summarize the challenges Latino students and families face in their efforts to excel in an educational environment that was designed for white middle class

students and which still generally views students from cultures outside of the mainstream as problems to fix (Rosario J. R., 2006).

The final barriers Latino students face are based on external societal, legal, and cultural factors. Immigration status adds an additional dimension of complexity that can influence Latino education. The Pew Research Center (2012) found that low dropout, high school completion, and college enrollment rates can primarily be attributed to lower rates for foreign born Latino youth. All immigrant groups face unique challenges to excelling academically, but many Latino students face acute uncertainty due to their immigration status. While they may aspire to higher education and a professional career, the prospect that achieving their goals may not be possible can lower their self-confidence and commitment to school. They face practical barriers regarding eligibility to attend higher education institutions and administrative application barriers. If they do pursue higher education, they face uncertainty around their ability to legally work in the United States and apply the education they have worked to achieve. For many students, the multiple barriers they face become insurmountable (Abergo and Gonzales, 2010; Alexio, Chin, Fennelly, & Shurilla, 2012; Gonzales, 2007).

Finally, stereotypes and the absence of positive role models have a direct influence on students' performance in school. Negative peer affiliations can have a significant effect on behaviors and decision making of students in general (Rosario J. R., 2006). For example, research shows that youth with friends who have dropped out of high school are much more likely to do the same (Ellengogen & Chamberland, 1997; Hess, 2000; Rumberger & Thomas, 2000; Velez & Saenz, 2001). Additionally, many schools lack both adult Latino role models and positive peer role models. When few Latino students graduate and go on to higher education, it may be difficult for Latino youth to see a viable academic path for themselves. Years of research have shown that the social relationships Latino students have at home and at school with people such as parents, friends and teachers are closely correlated with their school behavior, beliefs and perceptions about school, and ultimately their academic achievement (Baker, 1999; Shouse, 1996; Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). Other supporting evidence shows that negative stereotypes and low expectations towards Latino students have psychological effects on low self-esteem and frequently impact academic performance and achievement (Gonzales, P.M. Blanton, H., & Williams, K.J., 2002; Rosario J. R., 2006; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

As noted, these barriers stem from and societal and cultural disconnect between Latino students, their school culture, and the educational policies that govern school processes. Countless authors have highlighted the role of this cultural disconnect, not only for overall educational achievement, but for multiple components influencing education, from testing and degree attainment to things like discipline and classroom dynamics. These experiences are directly related to the historical processes of race relations in the United States and student's current experiences with race inside and outside of school. Furthermore, these experiences are not limited to Latino students and are documented for students from a variety of minority backgrounds (Boddie, 1997; Gonzales, P.M., Blanton, H.; & Williams, K.J., 2002; Gordon, Piana, & Keleher, 2000; Kohli, 2009; Kohli & Solorzano, 2012; Orfield &Eaton, 1996; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997).

Lee and Bowen (2006) conducted a study focusing on the achievement gap among elementary school children and examined educational attainment and academic achievement by race, ethnicity, poverty, and parent educational achievement. They argue that parent involvement and its effects on achievement differ among families according to three demographic variables- race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status- and parental educational attainment. In their study, teachers reported significantly higher academic achievement among students not living in poverty. However, this achievement gap was partially explained by the levels and effects of parent involvement, and the interactions between parent involvement and other demographic characteristics. Involvement at school occurred more often for parents whose culture and lifestyle were more congruent with the school's culture. Less involvement at school on the part of some parents may represent a significant disadvantage to their children. The findings of the study indicate that African American, Latino, and low income parents reported similar levels of homework help as European American and higher income parents. These findings show a strong association between parent involvement and achievement and highlights disparities by ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

In 2009, Lopez also completed a study attempting to explain the attainment gap for Latinos in the United States. He argues that the biggest reason for the gap between the high value Latinos place on education and their aspirations to finish college appears to come from the financial pressure to support their families. Additional reasons are poor English language skills, a dislike of school, and a feeling that more education is not necessary to obtain and excel in the careers they plan to pursue. Lopez identifies a second gap which suggests that there is a difference between young Latinos who are immigrants and those who are born in the United States. Foreign born are more likely than native-born Latino youth to be supporting or helping to support a family either in the U.S. or in their country of origin. These findings show that Latinos place a high importance on higher education for success, and that parents place a great emphasis on the goal of pursuing a higher education. Latino youth, however, do not match the level of importance Latinos in general place on higher education, and Latino youth are less likely to be enrolled in school than all youth. Adults and youth have divergent perceptions about the reasons behind the low academic achievement of Latino students. Adults feel that parents of Hispanic students do not play an active role in helping their children succeed, and that limited English language skills and different cultural backgrounds contribute to low academic achievement for Latinos. They also felt that Latino students do not work as hard as other students. Latino youth generally give a positive evaluation of their high school and the roles their parents play in their education.

The 2012 Pew Research Center report "Between Two Worlds" describes the educational attainment of Latino youth through three indicators: the status dropout rate, the status completion rate, and the college enrollment rate. It highlights that dropout rates for Latino youth are higher than other youth, and concludes that the dropout rate among Latino youth is driven by the foreign born population; notably, second generation Latino youth have a lower dropout rate than foreign-born. The low high school completion rate for foreign-born Latino youth is also the primary reason that the high school completion rate for all Latinos is below the U.S. average; second generation Latinos, have a higher level of high school completion, but are still behind the completion rate for White students. Additionally, the college enrollment rate for Latinos (which is defined only for those who

have completed high school) is lower than the average rate of college enrollment for all youth. Furthermore, the Latino education achievement gap is already significant in middle school.

The Impact of Discrimination on Learning

Stereotype Threat & Academic Achievement

Stereotype threat serves as a critical point of analysis in this particular context. Steele (1997) defines it as follows: "the fear that one's behavior may confirm or be understood in terms of a negative stereotype associated with one's social group." Studies have shown that "individuals who are targets of a negative ability stereotype are at risk of doing poorly on tests of ability" (Gonzales, P.M., Blanton, H., & Williams, K.J., 2002). Furthermore, research linking stereotype threat to educational outcomes has also found there to be a gender component. When a student has more than one identity that face oppressive stereotyping, the threat increases. Steele and Aaronson's research addresses the way that fear of confirming negative stereotypes leads to high levels of performance pressure that can ultimately undermine performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The negative impact of stereotypes on Latino academic achievement must continue being addressed as new programs are created to support these students. When few Latino students graduate and go on to higher education, it may be difficult for Latino youth to see a viable academic path for themselves.

Discrimination in the Classroom

Racial microaggressions function in the same vain that stereotype threat does. Although racism is directly linked to conceptions of race, factors such as language, immigration status and culture often play into highly racialized systems (Kohli 2009). Huynh defines ethnic microaggressions as "a form of everyday, interpersonal discrimination that are ambiguous and difficult to recognize as discrimination" (Huynh, 2012, pp. 831). Whether intentional or not, microaggressions "communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group'' (Sue et al. 2007,p. 273). For years scholars have theorized the intersectional nature of race in relations to other forms of subordination in U.S. society. Kohli (2012) stresses that, "It is important to understand racism beyond blatant or overt acts of discrimination. There are more subtle forms of racism that exist in daily life, which may be hard to pinpoint as racism, but cause harm nonetheless (p. 446)." Kohli, and others have argued that racial microaggressions can be divided into different categories ranging from subtle verbal and non-verbal assaults to repetitive insults and assaults, all of which take a heavy toll on students' learning processes. For example, Kohli and Solórzano (2012) address microaggressions that result from a lack of interest or respect for the names of students of color in the k-12 classroom, and the impact this type of racism can have on the students who endure it. They assert that racial microaggressions are the most dangerous when they influence students to start questioning their own worth in US society. The constant mispronunciation of Latino students' names in the classroom can significantly alter the learning environment from a positive to a hostile one. A Latina in a teacher education program included in their study noted how teachers she observed consistently mispronounced their immigrant students' names.

> The teacher called someone whose name is Fidel, 'Fiddle, Fiddle,' and the student did not respond because that's not his name. You're not going to respond to your name if you don't recognize it. And then she berated him, yelled at him, like, 'Why aren't you answering me? Why aren't you answering me?' and of course imagine how confused [he was]. It was clear that [he was thinking]... 'This teacher is yelling at me because I'm doing something wrong. I don't know what I'm doing, but I'm being bad' (Kohli, 2012, 454).

Although this serves as one of many examples of microaggressions Latino students can experience in the classroom it must not be taken lightly. It further accentuates a racialized power dynamic between the teacher and their student. A Latina student in the study named Maythee describes her experiences where teachers consistently mispronounced her name:

> Since kindergarten I've had my name anglicized to May-ThE...I did have one bad experience in high school when a biology teacher spent the whole year calling me Maitai! I just never had the nerve to correct him until the end when a bunch of students told him. I've always known that no one remembers my name so I have to make it a point of repeating it frequently. It's definitely always made me feel like an outsider. Since I come from an immigrant family, it was always yet another way that I knew I was not American. As a child, I used to try to anticipate when teachers were going down the list so I could say my name out loud before they had a chance to mispronounce it.

This and other microaggressions present in the k-12 classroom can become significant barriers for students, especially when they begin at such a young age, and when they may not have the language or tools to defend themselves. Addressing racial microaggressions in schools requires that teachers are able to identify and expand their cultural limits (Kohli, 2012). Teachers are put in a position where they must acknowledge the power they have to influence a student's sense of self pride and potential.

Undocumented Students

Discrimination and academic motivation and access takes a complicated turn in the unique case of undocumented Latino students. As Abergo & Gonzalez (2010) address, "a substantial portion of undocumented youth is growing up with legal access to public education through high school but facing legal restrictions and economic barriers to higher education and the workforce" (pp. 144). Research shows that the reality of having access to education suddenly become unattainable greatly contributes to lagging academic motivation among Latino youth. Undocumented 1.5 generation Latino students[7] are faced with a series of limiting circumstances linked to their immigration status, resulting from a group of contradictory statutes at both the federal and state level. Undocumented youth by law can attend school, yet they cannot work, vote, receive financial aid to attend college, and in most cases drive. Furthermore they can be deported back to a country they barely know,

[7] Someone who migrates at an early age and resides in the U.S. without legal permission (Abrego & Gonzalez, 2010)

and many times do not even remember. This reality amplifies the already existing effects of racial microaggressions and stereotype threat Latino students who are documented already face. Like most of their documented peers, "many undocumented students have internalized American values and expectations that equate academic success with economic rewards and stability" (Abergo & Gonzalez, 2010, 147). As a result, when they are so clearly excluded from gaining access to higher education, many become disillusioned and ultimately drop out of school. Undocumented immigration to the U.S. continues to be the target of policies and cultural debates in the political arena. Many of these political discourses reproduce negative attitudes toward immigrants, particularly those who are undocumented. Depictions of undocumented immigrants as criminal, violent, and uneducated are also continuously disseminated by mass media. Recent definitions of xenophobia locate the fear of foreigners as being rooted in ethnocentrism and feelings of superiority.

Undocumented students then have to face daily consequences of being direct and indirect targets of racialized xenophobic views. Yakushko (2008) defines xenophobia as "a form of attitudinal, affective, and behavioral prejudice toward immigrants and those perceived as foreign" (pp. 43). If U.S. history is any indication, xenophobia tends to be at its strongest during times of economic and political turmoil. Anti-immigrant sentiments are oftentimes justified on the basis that they are rooted in realistic concerns of the host community (Fry, 2001). "Because attitudes about immigration often relate to national economic stability, several theories have attempted to delineate how perceived feelings of threat contribute to the creation of negative views toward those who seem to challenge economic well-being of the in-group" (Yakushko, 2008, pp. 46). The anti-immigrant discourse reflected in policy ranging from Arizona's SB1070 law to presidential debates, has a lasting impact on undocumented students receiving the message that not only are they welcome, but that they do not have the right to an education.

Promoting Educational Success for Latino Students

Like most parents, Latinos have high hopes and expectations for their children's achievements. They hope their children will excel beyond their own achievements and work hard to support this success. However children of Latino families, on average, are far behind their White counterparts in educational achievements. Latino schooling in the U.S. has long been characterized by high dropouts, and low higher education completion rates (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009).

Establishing New Models of Achievement

Despite the fact that educational achievement is one of the main concerns for students of color, there is no single established model for achievement. Nonetheless, according to the Ecological Perspective, it is important to consider internal and external factors influencing educational achievements, as these factors, commonly structural and social barriers, block opportunities and undermine educational outcomes. The ecological model guiding this research acknowledges ethnic-cultural heterogeneity and accordingly relates research questions, methods, and cultural complexity in the approach (Sasao & Stanley, 1993). In the past two decades scholars have

discussed a number of factors negatively impacting the educational achievements of immigrant students. Below are a few highlights from our research thus far.

Kao and Tienda (1998) argue that educational aspirations are influenced by social class and membership, parents' income and parents' education. They describe parent influences on aspirations as essential, as parents control financial and psychological support; material resources are decisive in shaping and achieving school outcomes for youth. Kao and Tienda also suggest that there are other factors associated with educational outcomes in addition to family income: family background and structure; parental investment on education; availability to educational materials, including a computer at home, place to study, and after school classes like music, dance, and languages. This study concludes that despite the optimism Latino youth may have, they lack information about college, including admissions, and financial aid, which can at times drive ambivalence toward academic performance. If Latino youth believe college is unobtainable due to insurmountable obstacles, they may wonder, "why to worry about grades?"

Positive Learning Environments

The Importance of Positive Peer Role Models

Some studies have attributed the low academic achievement among Latino youth to segregation in a racially stratified society (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Research has shown that low-income students of color are oftentimes placed in learning environments with limited resources (Conchas, 2003). Although schools, on their own, do not have the power to completely overturn structural inequality at the higher socioeconomic level, they have significant power in how their students experience social conditions. Negative peer affiliations can have a significant effect on behaviors and decision making of students in general. Research shows that youth with friends who have dropped out of high school are much more likely to do the same (Ellengogen & Chamberland, 1997; Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). This has also been the case for Latino students. "Latino youth with friends who have left school are much less likely to experience academic success and complete high school" (Hess, 2000; Velez & Saenz, 2001).

> *For working-class minority youth to achieve success in school requires more than their simply being exposed to the academic values and identities of the "others." It requires that the social relations of working-class minority students be mobilized as social resources. In addition, schools must make available to these students the kinds of institutional support that can counter their marginalization, help them "master the academic curriculum," and teach them the rules that govern who gets ahead in the system and how. Once again this leads us to the importance of relationships with peers and key adults who can function as a mediating link or pathway to needed resources.* (Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama, 2004, p. 179)

Schools not only lack adult Latino role models but also positive peer role models. A significant amount of research exposes the link between positive relationships both in a child's school and home environment and their academic achievement. Having strong role models within their school

environment often improves Latino students' own self-perception as well as academic success. The relationship between Latino students and their teachers are central in discourses on minimizing the Latino achievement gap. In order to foster positive and caring relationships with their Latino students, teachers must be willing to recognize the pressures and challenges their students face not only in the classroom but also outside (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Recognizing these challenges means understanding the role that stereotypes and different modes of prejudice play in their students' life and being willing to consider how those might affect their learning processes.

Strong Teacher-Student Relationships

Latino students that have strong relationships with their teachers have been shown to have higher academic results. Sosa & Gomez (2012) address the ways in which a teachers' sense of efficacy has the power to influence the interactions believed to improve students' ability to overcome obstacles. Research shows that teachers are crucial components in influencing student resilience. "Since resilience refers to the protective factors that influence student persistence and engagement in school, and it can easily be argued that not all teachers successfully promote resilience, it may be possible to consider teachers with a high sense of efficacy, around this construct, to see how they positively influence this process" (pp.878). Although different scholars have defined teacher self-efficacy in different ways, the general consensus lies in the understanding that teachers can "positively influence students' learning and outcomes (Ashton et al., 1982). One of the central factors in promoting a positive school environment through teacher-student relationships is to ensure that they believe all their students are capable of learning and being successful (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). In the last twenty years, several studies have shown that race or ethnic background can affect a teacher's sense of self-efficacy. For example Pang and Sablan's (1998) survey of 175 teachers regarding racial attitudes towards Black students, showed that most of them doubted they could successfully teach their Black students and other students of color. "Teachers' negative perceptions of students, and assumptions about their community, led to teachers feeling incapable of successfully teaching African American students" (Sosa & Gomez, 2012, 880). Although this serves as one example, Pang and Sablan's study should not be considered as a unique exception. The influence of a child's school environment in the larger context of their academic achievement should not be taken lightly. Lee and Smith's work (1996) demonstrates that schools with teachers that consider their students diverse backgrounds and learning abilities as assets rather than failures, and where there is support and encouragement from staff, the achievement gap is significantly lower. Academic resilience literature locates teachers as key in affecting how their students not only experience education, but also continue to be engaged. "Student academic resilience relies largely on teachers' practices, including forming caring relationships, building a positive learning environment, and creating established classroom routines (Doll & Lyon, 1998l Kenny et al., 2002; Knight, 2007; Masten et al., 1998; Want et al., 1990). Studies such as the one conducted by Alfaro and her colleagues (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, Gonzalez- Backen, Bámaca, & Zieders, 2009) showcase the negative effects of discrimination on the academic engagement and achievement of Latino youth.

Community Engagement

Supporting Education Models that Embrace Community

The inclusion of community engagement in models of educational success opens up new possibilities for Latino students. Schools need programs that engage Latino immigrant communities, where there's often already an existing language barrier between teachers and families. Rosario and Rosario assert the importance of community engagement in success for students:

Community-centered approaches recast many of the educational issues facing Latinos as community-wide concerns that have implications for 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 (p. 32).

They discuss the effectiveness of the community school model for Latino students. In the community school model, schools are not only a place of learning but also a community center that can address student needs that extend beyond the classroom: providing extended day, weekend, and summer educational programming; connecting students and their families to health and social services; providing early childhood education; providing adult education and working closely with families; hosting and sponsoring community wide events; and incorporating community service and project-based learning. Additionally it addresses community wide initiatives like economic development and the well-being of community members outside of the school. It recognizes that education is not limited to the classroom, but is intertwined with students' and families' lives and the communities they live in. Additionally, Sattin-Bajaj and Suárez-Orozco highlight the benefits of creating partnerships with community organizations that have a connection to the families of their students.

The Role of Parents in Latino Student Achievement

Parents are often attributed with being the central cause of uneven student achievement. As a child's first teacher, a parent has the power to impact early childhood development. Such influences are evident in early literacy skills (Adger, Snow & Christian, 2002). Berkeley High School's Diversity Project, which lasted from 1997 until 2002, was largely rooted in the notion that parents play a crucial role in their children's' academic achievement (Noguera, 2006). Their approach to collaborating with parents borrows from John Dewey (1995) who argued the role and vision of parents should be taken seriously: "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must be what the community wants for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon it destroys our democracy" (p.7). In 1997, the Diversity Project established the Parent Outreach Committee with the specific purpose of targeting and working with families of students with poor academic performance (Noguera, 2006). The Parent Outreach Committee and the Diversity Project at large exemplify programs that enact systems in which parents can advocate for themselves and their children.

The Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) in Chicago has also been greatly successful in supporting Latino educational attainment in their schools. Residents of Logan Square are mostly

Latino, with 96% of families being low-income. The Parent Mentor program was founded in 1995 when LSNA convinced schools to let parents volunteer in the classroom. Leticia Barrera, Education coordinator describes the program as "a place for them to be able to explore themselves and realize they can do things they think they can't." After seventeen years, LSNA's Parent Mentor Program has graduated more than 1300 parents and become a nationally recognized parent engagement model that builds deep and lasting relationships between students, teachers, and parents. Patricia Lopez, a parent mentor, noted the intricate ways in which the parent mentor program helps immigrant mothers:

> *I gained confidence, many of us are at home, we don't work. So this is a great opportunity to feel that you are valued, that you can contribute not only to your child's education but also to the community. They gave us training in different topics, domestic violence—I think that is very important, to let us know that we have rights and that we have the power. And we have potential to succeed.*

Lopez, like many other parent mentors, had the opportunity to join the Grow Your Own Teachers initiative within the parent Mentor Program which trains community members to become bilingual teachers, and now has a teaching license. The success of this program serves as an example as to how parent participation can positively affect Latino student achievement. "When parents are involved," Lopez notes, "children can look that parents are participating with the school and with them [the children.] They are a great example for them. Later in life, they can continue with their education because parents are involved, it's very simple." LSNA's Parent Mentor Program works with community organizations and schools to recruit about 10 parents per school to assist teachers two hours per day. Parent mentors receive a stipend after 100 volunteer hours.

Having parent mentors participate in Latino children's education provides necessary support for students in early grades, as parent mentors specifically address the needs of primary students. Many Latino students need additional support in grades preK-3 due to the process of gaining literacy in two languages. Parent mentors also provide much needed support for teachers by helping connect them to the culture of the community. The intensive parent training mentors undergo, transforms them in to strong community assets and resources, while offering them a pathway to bilingual teaching or other careers. LSNA's parent mentor initiative serves as a powerful example of ways in which schools can draw on the strengths of families to enhance their students' education. Through this model we see schools becoming vibrant centers of community where families can begin to use the school as a place to support their student's achievement as well as access adult education classes and multiple services.

Uneven Access to Resources in Education

Cultural and Social Capital

For years, sociologists have argued that uneven access to resources amplifies disparities in school achievement (Conchas, 2003). Cultural and social capital have been considered central components that can lead to educational inequities. Despite the varying interpretations of both concepts,

consensus among scholars, educators and activists acknowledges that both have the power to affect access and participation in social networks. Monkman, 2005, asserts that social and cultural capital "Reflect social relationships, cultural practices, and knowledge that are used to gain social and economic benefit" (pp.7). Copper, 2010, writes about social capital as consisting of networks that improve one's chances at drawing instrumental and social support. Considering uneven access to cultural and social capital for students creates a more complex understanding of the ways in which inequality is reproduced within the school system. As Monkman addresses, "high status cultural practice and knowledge, and access through elite networks become the indications through which success is recognized and rewarded (pp.4). Cultural capital has commonly been associated with activities that upper-class families have access to. Uneven access to cultural capital has been found to have significant effects on education.

Some scholars have addressed methods low-income students of color have used to enter social networks integral to social and cultural capital. Cooper, 2010 considers strategies youth of color use to gain access to high stakes educational information that may not be granted to them. Research shows that gaining entrance into one of them generally relies on membership in another. Cultural resources that become cultural capital are transmitted via social networks with the activation of social capital (Monkman, 2005). "By helping children build social networks and acquire access to social and cultural capital as well as to revalue existing resources, teachers make it possible for these children to benefit from their successes in school and in society" (pp. 30). Ensuring that students have equal access to supportive networks through cultural and social capital would positively impact their educational environment and even their academic attainment and college readiness.

Cultural Wealth

Reframing cultural and social capital as part of the discourse on educational equity and access introduce the notion of what it means to use culture as an asset in the classroom. Cooper 2010's work on cultural wealth comes from the consideration that race and socioeconomic class exacerbate the existing achievement. Statistics show that for Latina/os in high poverty schools, only about half of entering freshman will graduate (Cooper, 2010). Cultural wealth, as defined by Yosso, 2005 outlines an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, that communities of color utilize to survive and resist microaggressions and more obvious forms of racism.

Yosso and other scholars such as Daniel Solórzano have chosen to use a Critical Race Theory (CRT) approach to outline what a supportive community cultural wealth model would look like in the context of education. Aspirational, linguistic, navigational, familial, and resistance capital are all central factors to Yosso's discussion of cultural wealth. These different kinds of wealth build on each other within the community cultural wealth model. Aspirational capital underlines people's ability to remain positive about the future regardless of social, economic, and institutional barriers, and linguistic capital refers to various ways that people are able to communicate in different languages and other forms of expression (Yosso, 2005; Cooper, 2010).

Culture as an Asset in Education

Critical Race Methodologies: Transformation through Inclusive Narratives

Various studies have shown that addressing Latina/o students culture as an asset within the classroom can positively affect their academic environment and improve their educational achievements. Recognition of, and placing value on Latino students' culture is essential to engaging them in school and ensuring their needs are met. Culturally relevant curriculum is one central component of this (Rosario & Rosario, 2008, IBM Corporation, 2008) and includes incorporating culturally-relevant teaching materials, as well as topics and issues that directly connect to students' life experiences (Soltero, 2008). Education researchers have increasingly used Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) in their qualitative work. Both of these methodologies focus on spaces of empowerment within the narrator's experiences. Solórzano & Villalpando (1998) assert that CRT

> *views race, gender, or class marginality as important social locations and processes, with many positive strengths, and as rich sources of information used to empower or transform those at the social margins…The margins can and should be viewed as sites of oppression and sites of resistance* (p.215).

Approaches to educating Latino youth that incorporate LatCrit and CRT focus on the transformative nature of inclusive storytelling. Considering culture as an asset for Latino students rather than a limitation opens new doors and possibilities for education and academic achievement. Fernandez (2002) questions how we can get a comprehensive understanding of the ways Latina/os experience education if we rely solely on dominant school discourses. "These [CRT & LatCrit] theoretical frameworks prioritize the social categories of race, gender, class, and sexuality and recognize them not only as social constructions but also as categories that have real material effects on people"(pp. 46). Using experiential knowledge that culturally diverse Latinos bring into the classroom could contribute greatly to their educational experiences.

Solórzano & Yosso (2002) envision social justice research as central to creating pedagogies that can work to eliminate racism, sexism, and uneven access to resources in the classroom. Many scholars within Cultural and Latina/o studies have acknowledged critical race methodology to be a crucial component to creating socially conscious and inclusive modes of teaching Latino students. CRT allows for stories of people of color to be incorporated into education. As Solórzano asserts, "a critical race methodology in education recognizes that multiple layers of oppression and discrimination are met with multiple forms of resistance" (p. 23). Educators and scholars that incorporate CRT into their research and lesson plans, recognize the importance of ensuring that all of their students feel included in their own education. "Critical race methodology in education offers a way to understand the experiences of people of color along the educational pipeline" (36). In the context of Latino students, CRT creates a venue where stories of individuals and communities that are often excluded from educational narratives can be highlighted.

Breaking Down Deficit Models

Deficit perspectives have been instrumental in low levels of student achievement among Latino youth. Brown & Souto-Maning (2007) define a deficit lens as the assumption "that certain groups of

students (often those labeled by ethnicity, first language, socioeconomic status, and approach to learning tasks) are seen as "missing" certain skills or lacking background knowledge" (26). This approach links academic failure with home culture, rather than promoting new ways of teaching that supports a diverse classroom. Several scholars have studied the ways in which deficit discourse plays out in everyday narratives. Latino students in classrooms that follow deficit approaches are constantly confronted with racial microaggressions that can be serious impediments to their education. Educational policies have not been adequately created to meet the needs of Latino students' cultures and their ways of knowing (Brown & Souto, 2007). Considering the diverse nature of so many schools in the U.S., teachers must continue developing pedagogical approaches that can support "linguistically and culturally complex populations" (pp. 29). Sociocultural perspectives to education foster an approach to learning that sees Latino students' cultures as central to their processes of learning.

Teaching to Latina/o Students' Strengths

Acknowledging the strengths Latinos bring to their school communities can forge creative new ways of gauging and attaining academic success. Research shows a positive relationship between bilingualism and a students' academic attainment, not to mention that it prepares students to work outside of a U.S. context. A wide range of studies have demonstrated that students who are learning English as a second language benefit from bilingual instruction, as they are able to develop school-related vocabulary in their native language while learning English (Murillo, Villenas, Munoz, Martinez, & Machado-Casas, 2010). This allows ESL students to be able to understand instruction during the years it takes them to learn English. Violand-Sanchez & Hainer-Violand (2006) address Latino student achievement by highlighting the importance considering their home cultures as an asset to their education. "Addressing the needs of Latino students means acknowledging and capitalizing on the cultural and linguistic strengths that they bring to the classroom" (pp. 36). Some school districts have developed programming for Latino students that considers the knowledge affiliated with their life experiences and cultures. The Arlington Public School system has enforced culturally sensitive programs to service their Latino students, who make up 33% of their entire student body. Their dual language immersion, first-language support, and Spanish for fluent speakers programs are all centered on the idea of language as an educational asset. They've also found that activities that promote a sense of community leadership while honoring students' heritage have positively affected their Latino students. "By honoring the complexity of language and culture as well as the tenacious spirit that Latino students bring to the classroom, schools can teach to Latino students' strengths" (Violand-Sanchez & Hainer-Violand, 2006, 40). Utilizing culture as an asset within the classroom has taken different forms in the realm of curriculum building, one of the key approaches that focuses on the strengths of culture is social justice pedagogy.

Building New Curriculum: Empowerment, Equal Standards, & High Academic Achievement

Different schools have opted to incorporate social justice approaches to curriculum building into their classrooms, an approach that has proven to be quite successful with Latino youth. Various

educators have worked to address ways in which schools and educators can enact socially just and engaging pedagogy that's inclusive of Latino students. The tendency to ignore the impacts of racism, classism, and other forms of prejudice has been found to have significant impact on teacher preparation (Lopez, 2003; Swartz, 2003). Rodriguez (2011) looks at ways teachers' narratives can be inclusive of their students' histories and life experiences. "Narrative researchers hold in common the view that in the stories we tell about our teaching, we are narrating our selves negotiating every day social encounters in our classrooms, and telling ourselves and others who we are as a teacher" (Rodriguez, 2011, 241). Some schools and educators have taken similar approaches to building curriculum that reflects and incorporates the narratives of their own students.

Teaching Mathematics for Social Justice: The case of a Chicago Public School

Although people tend to associate social justice curriculum to social studies and humanities, Gutstein (2009) writes about how he taught mathematics for social justice in a Chicago public school. Gutstein addresses the importance of parent participation in his own program. Students' parents saw math as a crucial component to their children's academic success. At the same time, they viewed responding to injustice/oppression as central parts of their lives. "Because (mathematics) education should prepare one for life—and injustice, resistance, and mathematics were al interconnected parts of life—and education made sense if it prepared children to be aware of and respond to injustices that they faced as members of marginalized communities" (pp.331). Gutstein locates two sets of pedagogical goals as central to the success of his classes. The social justice goals were that students foster a heightened consciousness of the conditions of their lives, communities and society at large, with the belief that they could act on the world to generate change toward social justice. The mathematics goals were to ensure students would develop the necessary skills to follow and solve complicated mathematical tasks, and would begin to see math as productive and necessary for understanding the world around them. Tita, one of Gutstein's students for several years, responded positively to the social justice math curriculum:

> *And for me, life is political. To say you have nothing to eat, to say you have no money to pay for this, it's all political. So then why not learn it this way?* (Gutstein, 2009, 331)

Beyond students learning mathematics through exclusively work problems, Gutstein developed projects where students investigated different forms of discrimination and inequity using math. Key to his classroom, these projects ranged from a couple days to a couple weeks. "A central component was that my students and I co-created a classroom climate that supported investigations of racism and other discrimination inequality" (pp.337).

The Importance of Curriculum that Serves Diverse Students

In 1999, Rodriguez Magnet Elementary school in Massachusetts, partnered with the Constructivist Teacher Education Project (CTEP) at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst to create the Social Justice Education in Schools Project (SJES). This partnership stemmed from focused efforts to prepare educators to work effectively I to serve all students I their diverse classrooms (Carlisle, Jackson, & George, 2007). Rodriguez Elementary, with majority Black and Latino students, has a 90% rate of students identified as "low-income." Initial conversations in the planning stages of SJES

began highlighting the connections between social justice and student achievement. Participants repeated brought up the issues of cultural insensitivity of the school and teachers, family involvement, and the need more a multicultural awareness curriculum. Carlisle, Jackson, & George (2007) define social justice education as "the conscious and reflective blend of content and process intended to enhance equity across multiple social identity groups" (pp. 57). This program sought to respond to these concerns by incorporating curriculum that could foster inclusivity in the classroom. SJES was centered on the following five principles: inclusion and equity; high expectations; reciprocal community relationships; system-wide approach; direct social justice education and intervention. All five principles stress the importance of creating positive learning environments for all of their students, where they can feel empowered to succeed.

Meeting State Requirements, Fostering Cultural Pride

The Social Justice Education Project (SJEP) in Tucson, Arizona's Cerro High School came out of a partnership between a couple professors from the University of Arizona and a few teachers from the high school (Cammarota, 2007). In 2000, Cerro was the lowest ranking in standardized test scores for any other public school in Tucson (Tucson United School District, 2000). The program helped low-income Latino students fulfill their social science requirement through socially relevant pedagogy. Socially relevant in this context means that students focus their education on social justice issues related to their own lived experiences (Cammarota, 87). Although many students in the first cohort were labeled "at risk" youth they excelled with the coursework and were able to graduate. The curriculum behind SJEP teaches Chicano Studies, Critical Social Theory, participatory action research along with state requirements for U.S. History and Government (pp.88). This advanced level curriculum allowed students to think proactively about their education and ways to reach their future academic goals and dreams.

Validia Tejerina, one of the students in SJEP's first cohort, had been identified as failing by the school after she scored significantly below average on the standardized tests. Tejerina addressed how the curriculum changed her perception of herself giving her the confidence to stay in school (pp. 91) It gives you not so much the power, but you know, the pride—when usually you are just like, "well I am going to drop out." Because you ain't got no pride. You ain't got no self-esteem. Nothing going for yourself. Learning…this just helps that situation." Many students that have gone through the program have talked about the importance of building pride and self-esteem in their success. Arturo Ramirez enrolled into SJEP as a junior with only three credits towards graduation (pp.92). Ramirez insisted that the program's ability to use Latino culture as an asset within the classroom was pivotal in encouraging him to stay in school. "Before this class I did not know who I was. I did not know where my family came from. I just was thinking what everything is and who I am…It's the power—to know who you are and to be proud of who you are. It just like, gives you power to do better for yourself—to keep learning, want to keep doing things." Having been granted opportunities to reflect on their social realities, SJEP students felt encouraged to strive for a better future. SJEP demonstrates how an experimental social science curriculum can positively influence Latina/o students' perspective of their potential to graduate high school.

Successful Program Components & Models

In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education published a report on successful models for Latino student achievement. Through this research they highlighted the importance of learning through guidance, practice and experience. The final report also asserted the importance of complex teaching strategies that can meet the needs of diverse classrooms by highlighting some effective and flexible program models. With collaborate learning and teaching at the center, the U.S. Department of Education addressed the ways in which the classroom can be a place that can link education with students' everyday experiences. Some of these models included Joint Producitive Activities, Reading and language development embedded in the curriculum, challenging expectations, and instructional conversations.

Although different schools have used different approaches to create programs to support their Latino students, there have been successful nationally disseminated models. *Success for All/ éxito Para Todos* is a comprehensive preK-6 curriculum in reading, writing, & language arts that relies on daily instructional groups that work together across grade levels (Department of Education, 2000). Instructed in phonics, comprehension, individual literacy, the students engage in group discussions of vocabulary comprehension, as well as write individually and in groups. This model requires the promotion of cooperative learning strategies that foster critical thinking, and language development. This model also has incorporated a Spanish version whose adaptation reflects the influence of language and culture on content and materials in the curriculum. The *Consistency Management and Cooperative Disipline/Disciplina Consistent y Cooperativa* functions as a school-wide program which has demonstrated significant improvements in learning environments and student achievement among Latino youth. This framework emphasizes caring, prevention, cooperation, organization, and a sense of community leadership and resilience. To prepare teachers for the school year, schools hold summer workshops and ongoing meetings during the school year to adjust and improve the program's implementation in the classroom. *Reading Recover/ Descubriendo la lectura*, is a tutoring program set up to support the lowest-achieving first-grade readers. Their focus is teaching effective pedagogical strategies for reading and writing. The teacher training component focuses on diagnosing students' literacy challenges and teaching them how to overcome them. Programs that have had success with Latino academic achievement have been rooted in strong support systems. Mehan and colleagues (1996) documented how the AVID program provided the help and resources to facilitate the success of Mexican and African Americans. Uneven access to resources disproportionately affects students of color (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995).

Implications for Policy and Practice

> *We must struggle against the ruinous consequences of blaming the dire circumstances of those with the fewest advantages in school on their own lack of ability and efforts or on their failure to take advantage of schooling. No mere structural changes—detracking included—can bear the weight of changing these powerful norms and the political arrangements that hold them in place. However, such reforms can prompt an honest, public dialogue about whether*

Americans are ready to extricate schools from the structural inequalities that permeate our lives and undermine our democracy… (Oakes, 2005, p. 300).

The Institutionalization of Educational Inequities

The public policy discourse on (Huynh, 2012)inequities requires an understanding of the institutional processes that have created the achievement disparities to begin with. The origins of the achievement gap between students of color and their White classmates cannot be named in isolation. In fact the educational attainment gap of the 21st century resulted from years of educational segregation and unequal resources that can be easily traced to African American, Mexican-American and Native American communities. "The phenomenon of Latino school segregation, mostly confined to Mexican Americans, originated in the middle part of the nineteenth century, but between 1890 and 1960, it expanded significantly to other parts of the country" (Murillo, 2010, p. 30). Although no legal statuses demanded the isolation of Mexican American students, school segregation increased among Latinos and other communities of color. Public education for Latino students was unequal from its inception. The staff at Latino schools was less qualified and experienced than teachers at White schools. Institutional mistreatment represents another pattern that negatively impacted Latino students (Murillo, Villenas, Munoz, Martinez, & Machado-Casas, 2010). "In the early part of the twentieth century, Latino children were classified as intellectually inferior on the basis of biased intelligence tests scores…Scholars interpreted these test scores as indicative of their innate abilities" (pp. 31). In addition to institutional bias, Latino students were continuously mistreated not only by their classmates but by their teachers as well. "Many Latino children were punished simply for speaking Spanish at school or in the classroom. In some integrated classes, teachers interacted with Anglo students more and had less praise for Latino children."

Conchas (2003) outlines an understanding of institutional processes that affect a student's access to a supportive system in education, particularly as it relates to Latino/a student success. This contributes greatly to addressing necessary shifts in public policy. Institutional forces operating within learning environment such as in-school segregation create uneven access to academic resources. Inequity in the classroom tends to disproportionately affect students of color (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). New policy working to lessen the achievement gap for Latinos must envision new institutional systems and pedagogical approaches that foster academic success. Addressing the policy sector as it relates to Latino education is complicated by many intricacies. Education policy does not work in isolation. Anti-immigrant sentiment in our current political climate has also generated a wide-range of policies that can directly affect a student's ability to succeed. Anti-immigrant policies have an undeniable impact on education, as they have specifically targeted the Latino population (Contreras, 2011). English Language (EL) students have been disproportionally affected by school environments where Latino students have unequal access to resources. The presence of "within-school segregation," is a powerful limitation for Latino students that are underserved in an educational context that is racially diverse on the basis of language proficiency (145). Policies affecting Latino students, although constantly shifting, have existed for several decades. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the Bilingual Education

Act of 1968 were adopted to ensure that bilingual children in the U.S. would still have educational opportunities. This example represents positive policies that had the opportunity to create environments of academic support for Latino youth. However we continuously see how anti-immigrant sentiment fuels bias against equal opportunities for Latino students. In an elementary and secondary schooling context, this plays out as a bias against investing and supporting the needs of EL students. In-depth analyses of current and past policies must be conducted to truly understand how the policy arena has and continues to affect how bilingual education is administered in public schools.

Shifting Policy: Generating Systems of Support for Latino Youth

Policy that works to lessen the achievement gap for Latinos must consider new institutional systems and pedagogical approaches that foster academic success through processes of embracing diversity. The public policy arena should be considered central in talking about the future of educating Latino students and promoting strong models of success. Considering the academic inequalities between Latino students and their White counterparts already shows that there needs to be systemic change within the school system and how Latino students are perceived and taught. By no means should this be read as a suggestion that Latino students need to be treated differently. Historically there has been unequal investment in the schools Latino students attend (Contreras, 2011). If we follow current statistical trends, by 2025, one out of five U.S. residents and 25% of children will be Latino. By 2050, over 30% of the total U.S. population will be of Latino origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). These numbers are one central indicator as to why policy must be taken seriously to improve their educational outcomes. "The discrepancy between the dramatic increase of Latinos as a proportion of the population and the significant gap they experience in educational achievement, access, and integration into the social and economic fabric of the United States, represents an interesting contradiction…" (Contreras, 2011, 2). Contreras' work explores just how important the role of public policy is in the education sector within the broader concept of investing in human capital. In this case Contreras defines human capital as follows: "where the individual is able to produce at higher levels in terms of quantity and quality, as a result of initial educational investment and training" (pp. 9). Policies that continue to thwart education equity for Latino students will not only undermine Latino youth's capabilities to succeed, but defend the support of infrastructures that perpetuate educational inequity. "A xenophobic approach to Latinos in the United States has led to several policies and proposals that attempt to deny Latinos access to human and civil services and exclude them from the very institutions that shape a democratic society, institutions that the Latino community has worked for generations to defend and support" (p. 2-3).

Raising Latino student achievement and success through education policy should be paired with effectively utilizing the legal arena to promote educational equity. The Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF) among others, have worked tirelessly to protect Latinos rights and opportunities. Contreras (2011) insists that moving a policy agenda forward requires promoting educational equity for Latino students. This requires better health care and access to social services, subsidized preschool programs, housing desegregation and stabilizations initiatives, as well as target recruitment and better preparation for teachers. Contreras along with other scholars, educators, and activists have cited Immigration policy reform, including the passage of the DREAM

Act, as central to the success of a policy agenda that supports Latino youth and their families. Educational attainment for Latino students requires institutional and financial support for dual-language education, as well as dropout prevention and college access programs (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, 330-32). In the context of the larger educational policy arena, those working to create new policy must address the cracks in the educational pipeline that have caused and continue to inhibit the successful completion of high school and transition to college for Latinos.

Additional Program Information

In 2011, the Chicano Latino Affairs Council (CLAC) convened three advisory committee meetings in order to develop its initiative focusing on education for Latinos in Minnesota. In addition to several key themes related to education for Latinos, five programs were identified for further research. These included three middle and high school programs in Minnesota- the TORCH program at Northfield High School, Sleepy Eye High School, and the ALMAS program at Henry Sibley High School in the Saint Paul Public School District,- and two national programs-- the Montgomery County Public School District (MCPS) in Maryland and the national Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program. Northfield and Sleepy Eye High Schools were included in this research project, Henry Sibley High School will be included in research for the second phase pilot project, and secondary research on MCPS and JAG is included here.

Montgomery County School District

Maryland's Montgomery County's school district, one of the most diverse in the nation, has ensured the success of their diverse student body at record numbers. Despite a 44% increase in poverty from 1999 to 2009, a 103% increase of ELL students, and an 11% overall increase in the district, Montgomery County was able to create an organization that supported both students and employees (2010 Learning First Alliance). The Latino population from the school district is graduating from college at twice the rate of the Latino population nation-wide, nearly at the rate of the country's overall graduation rate. Success in Maryland's Montgomery County "demonstrates how a sustained and multi-faceted effort to both raise the academic bar and close gaps in learning can significantly boost academic performance by students of color and increase it for white students as well" (Kane, 2011, p.1).

In order the create a significant systemic shift, the Montgomery school district developed organizational programming that would implement new systems and structures that could successfully create their desired outcome of preparing their students for college (2010 Learning First Alliance). The monitoring system put in place allowed for the identification of needed changes, and reexamination of determinants that make student college-ready enable the district to strengthen its existing and new programs. Superintendent Jerry Weast noted that these components made school "not only a psychologically safe place for employees and children but also a space that is very productive to

achieving these outcomes" (p. 2). The move towards focusing on higher education, as opposed to solely high school graduation, as the district's goal for students enforced a system that began considering the path to college readiness from early education onward (Kane, 2011). The focus on college readiness gives students the necessary tools early on with the knowledge that a college education is within their grasp. MCPS has created a series of education services and activities that have all worked to add value to meet the end goal. As a result of its 2004 indicators, Montgomery now follows seven markers to push achievement levels to higher rates than those set by the State of Maryland:

- Read at advanced levels in kindergarten through 2nd grade;
- Score "advanced" in reading on the Maryland Schools Assessment in grades 3-8;
- Complete advanced math in grade 5;
- Complete algebra with a C grade or higher by 8th grade;
- Complete algebra 2 with a C grade or higher by 11th grade;
- Score 3 on Advancement Placement (AP) exam of 4 on an International Baccalaureate exam;
- Score 1650 on the SAT college entrance exam or 24 on the ACT (Kane, 2011, p.2).

These new and improved standards, along with a strongly qualified staff, has given MCPS the tools to overhaul systemic components that were greatly contributing to their achievement gaps. By blurring the lines between the traditional roles and responsibilities of the school board, leadership team, principals, teachers, and parents, the district has been able to create systems and structures that would reinforce the behaviors necessary for success and thus lead for equity (Childress, 2009, p. 16). MCPS developed a pathway that set benchmarks in a wide range of content areas at grade levels from kindergarten through high school. District schools that had the highest numbers of low-income and students of color were dubbed Red Zones, and grated increased resources and monetary support. District leaders have worked to ensure that boards, managers, and staff follow new and improved guidelines that promote college readiness in the classroom.

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) [8]

Around the nation different nonprofits have worked to create support systems that can promote positive learning environments for underserved youth. Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) is one such organization. JAG is a state-based national non-profit whose work takes root in decreasing dropout rates among at-risk you by giving them the necessary tools to pursue post-secondary education and secure quality entry-level jobs. JAG's programming supports students from middle school all the way through early college.

The middle school program aims to help 6th-8th graders in their transition from middle school to high school. Student participants hone their leadership skills by participating as an effective member of a team. Experiential-based and community-based learning both are crucial components of the success of the program. Middle school student participants are automatically considered

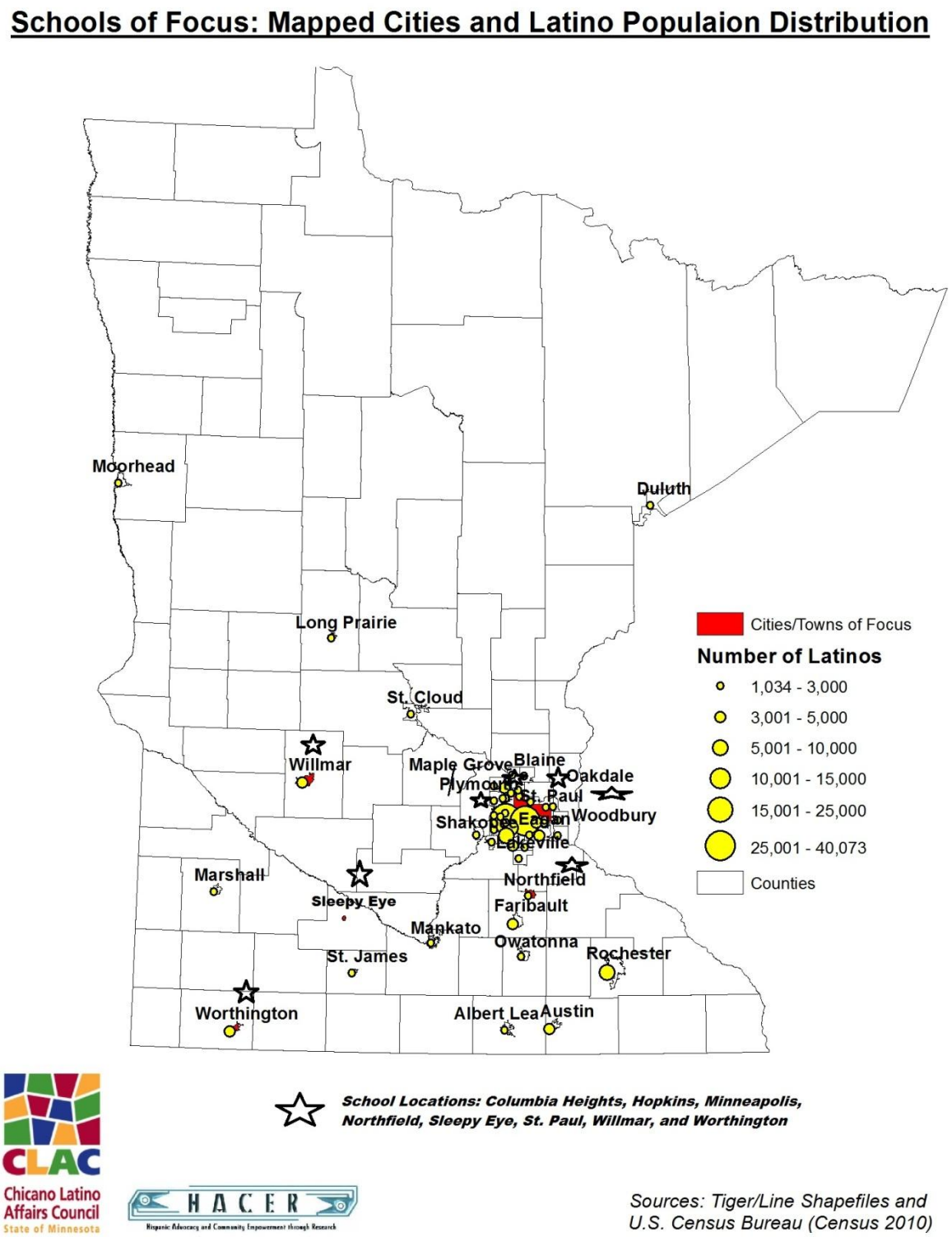
[8] This information is based on what is provided on JAG's official website. Independent evaluation on the effectiveness of the program was not available.

members of the JAG Career Association which refines the critical skills needed for success in the classroom. Specialists use tracking systems to monitor students' needs. The Middle School Curriculum, based on 7 modules for 7th graders and 6 for 8th graders, teaches students sills ranging from communication and organizational skills to career-based learning and leadership development. JAG specialists working with middle school participants maintain contact with their students transitioning into 9th grade for the entire year.

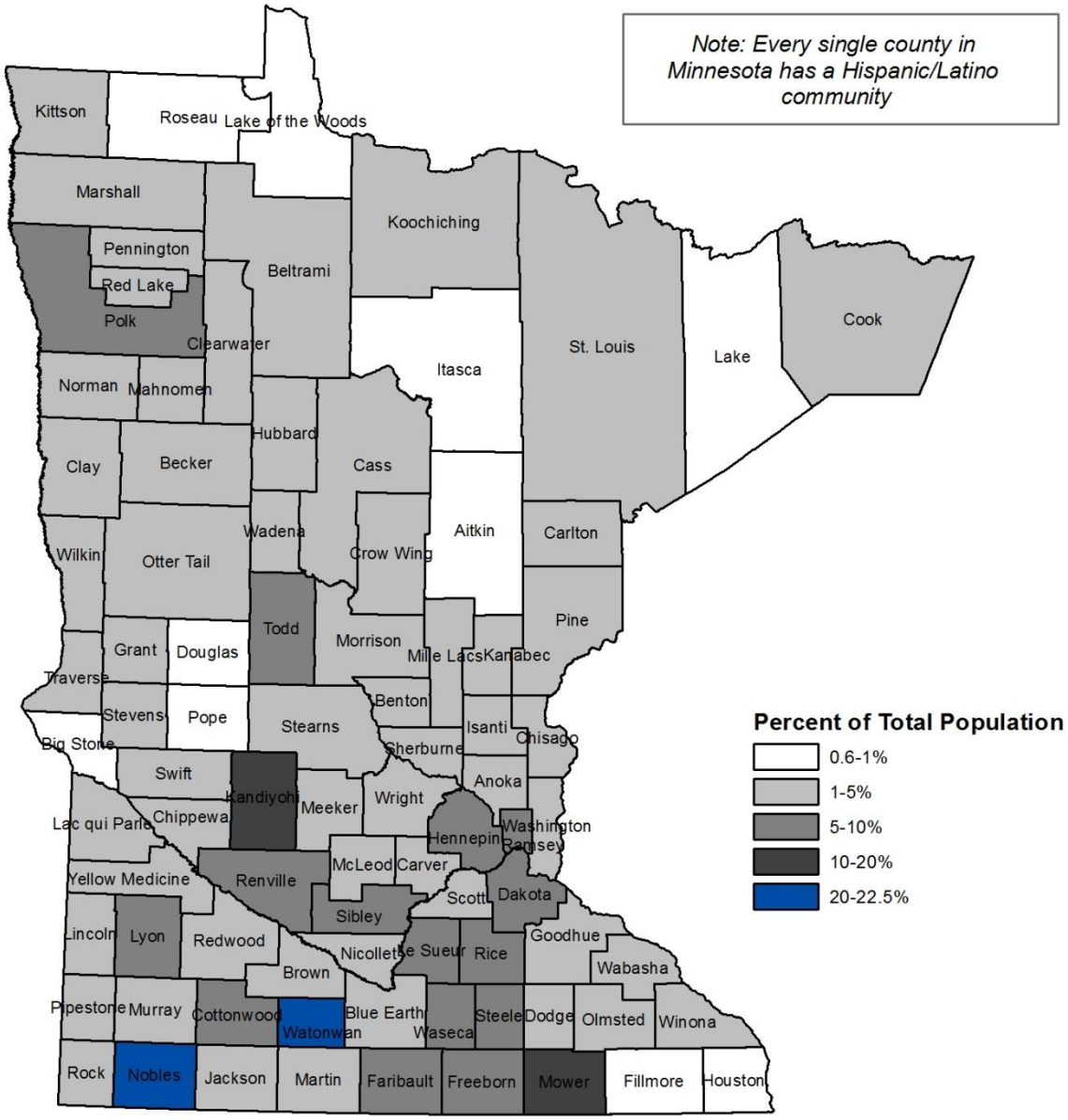
JAG's Multi-year Dropout Prevention Program recruits students in 8th grade to participate in JAG instructional classes throughout their high school years, with follow-through for one year past graduation. Specialists in the program contribute a wide range of support services including counseling, employability skills development, career association, job development, and job placement. These resources create a path for students that either leads them to a career or enrollment in a post-secondary education institution once they graduate. The Alternative Education and Seniors programs work in a similar way to the Multi-year Program. Alternative Education works with 25-30 students who have been determined to learn better with nontraditional teaching and education methods. Specialists involved in this program through JAG, use 87 competency-based modules as well as individualized instructional tools to aid in students' success. The Seniors program targets incoming 12th graders considered to be at risk of dropping out of high school. It provides support services similar to those included in the multi-year program, working to ensure that seniors complete all their requirements for graduation and have self-sustainable post-graduation plans. Students who do not graduate in that initial year receive additional support to ensure their graduation in the following year or to complete the GED.

Operated by the JAG National Network, The Out of School Program (OOS) serves youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are no longer part of the traditional school system and are interested in earning their high school diploma or attaining a GED. With 34-45 students per cohort, the OOS program lasts at the very least 24 months, including a 12 month follow-up period. The follow-up services provided to participants are one of the program's central functions. Throughout the course of a cohort's participation, there are trained career specialists serving as teachers and counselors. In addition, specialists continuously compile information on the post-completion labor market, schooling, and training outcomes of program participants to make necessary improvements for future years. The Early College Program was created as a way to support students as they entered their first year in college. JAG provides participants with a career coach that works with students throughout their college career and becomes a central pillar of support for them as they navigate new environment, and new academic and social challenges. The mentorship component of the program is reciprocal in nature. While students are mentored by a professional in their chosen field, they too become mentors for a student from their former high school interested in participating in the Early College Program. JAG also connects students with college, academic, career, and personal resources to ensure that they can be highly successful from the beginning. In addition to having highly qualified mentor, JAG also provides job shadowing activities where students are able to get an inside look into their chosen career field. All of these support services and program components work together to ensure that students are on track to stay in school and be successful in their chosen area of study.

Appendix 4: Maps- Distribution of Latinos and Spanish Speakers in Minnesota



Percent of Hispanics and Latinos in Minnesota by County (2010)

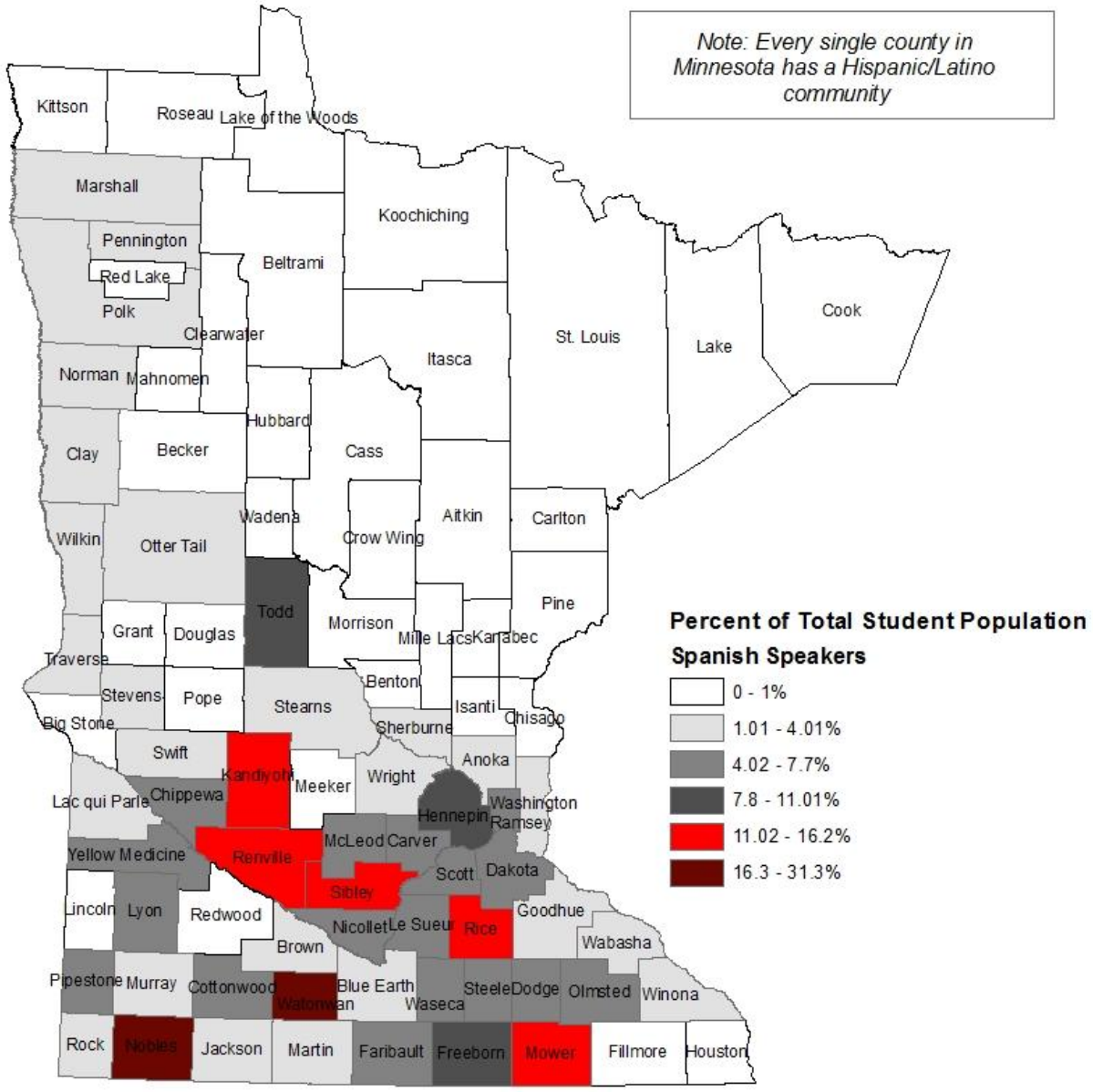


CLAC Chicano Latino Affairs Council State of Minnesota

HACER Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research

Source: Census 2010 and MetroGIS

Primary Language Spoken At Home: Spanish
All School Districts (2011-2012)



CLAC
Chicano Latino Affairs Council
State of Minnesota

HACER
Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research

Source: MN Department of Education and MetroGIS

Appendix 5: References

Abrego, L. J., & Gonzales, R. G. (2010). Blocked Paths, Uncertain Futures: The Postsecondary Education and Labor Market Prospects of Undocumented Latino Youth. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 144-157.

Alexio, M., Chin, J., Fennelly, K., & Shurilla, A. (2012). Analysis of Policies Toward Applications from Undocumented Immigrant Students to big Ten Schools. *Law and Inequality, Vol. 30 No. 1*, 1-17.

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2007). *The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools.* Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Boddie, J. L. (1997). *Finding a Crystal Stair: Exploring the Turn-Around Phenomenon Experienced by African American Urban Male Adolescents in High School.* Blacksburg, Virginia.

Brown, S., & Souto-Maning, M. (2007). "Culture is the Way They Live Here": Young Latin@s and Parents Navigate Linguistic and CUltural Borderlands in U.S. Schools. *Journal of Latinos in Education, 7:1*, 25-42.

Camarota, J., & Romero, A. (2006). A Critically Compassionate Intellecturalism for Latina/o Students: Raising Voices Above the Silencing in Our Schools. *Multicultural Education*, 16-23.

Cammarota, J. &. (2006). A Critically Compassionate Intellectualism for Latina/o Students: Raising Voices Above Silencing in Our Schools. *Multicultural Education, Winter*, 16-23.

Cammarota, J. (2007). A Social Justice Approach to Achievement: Guiding Latina/o Students Toward Educational Attainment with a Challenging, Socially Relevant Curriculum. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 40:1*, 87-96.

Carlisle, R. L., Jackson, B. W., & George, A. (2007). Principles of Social Justice Education: The Social Justice Education in Schools Project. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 39:1*, 55-64.

Chicano Latino Affairs Council. (n.d.). Latino Disparities in Minnesota.

Conchas, G. (2006). *The color of success: Race and high-achieving urban youth.* New York: Teahcers College Press.

Contreras, F. (2011). *Achieving equity for Latino students: Expanding the pathway to higher education through public policy.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Cooper, R. L.-G. (2010). The Relationship between High Stakes Information and the Community Cultural Wealth Model Perspective: Lessons from Milwaukee and Beyond. *Multicultural Learning and Teaching*, 73-94.

Dreifus, C. (2011 йил 30-May). The Bilingual Advantage. *The New York Times*, pp. 1-2.

Fernandez, L. (2002). Telling Sotries About School: Using Critical Race and Latino Critical Theories to Document Latina/Latino Education and Resistance. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8:45*, 45-65.

Garcia-Reid, P. R. (2005). School Engagement Among Latino Youth in an Urban Middle School Context: Vluing the Role of Social Support. *Education and Urban Society, 37,3*, 257-275.

Gilbert, A. (2010). Quest for Education. *The Journal of College Admission, No. 206*, 58-59.

Godinez, J. M., & Espejel, A. (2010). The Minnesota Immigrant College Access Movement: History, Policy, and Recommendations to Admission Counselors. *The Journal of College Admission, No. 206*, 54-57.

Gonzales, R. G. (2007). Wasted Talent and Broken Dreams: The Lost Potential of Undocumented Students. *Immigration Policy in Focus, Vol. 5 Issue 3*, 1-11.

Gonzales, R. G. (2010). More than Just Access: Undocumented Students Navigating the Postsecondary Terrain. *The Journal of College Admission, No. 206*, 48-52.

Gordon, R., Piana, L., & Keleher, T. (2000). *Facing the Consequences: An Examination of Racial Discrimination in U.S. Public Schools.* Oakland, CA: Applied Research Center.

Governor's Workforce Development Council. (2011). *Closing the Skills Gap: Five Recommendations to Ensure All Students Graduate Ready for Success.* Governor's Workforce Development Council.

Gutstein, E. (2009, 8:3). "The Real World as We Have Seen It": Latino/o Parents' voices on Teaching Mathematics for Social Justice. *Mathematical Thinking and Learning*, 331-358.

Guyll, M., Madon, S., Prieto, L., & Scherr, K. C. (2010). The Poetential Roles of Self-Fulfilling Prophecies, Stigma Consciousness, and Stereotype Threat in Linking Latino/a Ethnicity and Educational Outcomes. *Journal of Social Issues, 66:1*, 113-130.

Huynh, V. W. (2012). Ethnic Microaggressions and the Depressive and Somatic Symptoms of Latino and Asian American Adolescents. *J Youth Adolescence*, 831–846.

IBM Corporation . (2008). *America's Competitiveness: Hispanic Participation in Technology Careers.* IBM.

Kane, M. & Cruver, A. (2011, June). *Montgomery County School District's Targeted Approach Raises the Bar and Reduces the Gap. Saint Paul, MN: Growth and Justice.*

Kane, M., & Pacas, J. (2011, June). *We're All in this Together: Educational Achievement and Attainment by Minnesotans of Color.* Saint Paul, MN: Growth and Justice.

Kao, G., & Tienda, M. (1998). Educational Aspirations of Minority Youth. *American Journal of Education vol. 106, No. 3, 106*(3), 349-384.

Kohli, R. &. (2012). Teachers, please learn our names!: racial microagressions and the K-12 classroom. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 15:4*, 441-462.

Korpela, S. (2012). School in Finland- The Key to National Success. Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Lee, S., & Bowen, N. (2006). Parent Involvement, Cultural Capital, and the Achievement Gap Among Elementary School Children. *American Educational Research Journal Vol. 43, No. 2*, 193-218.

Lewis, P. G. (2004). Best Practices and Biggest Obstacles in Educating Hispanic Migrant Students. *A Thesis Submitted to the University of North Carolina at Willmington in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education*. Donald R. Watson School of Education, University of North Carolina at Willmington.

Lopez, M. (2009). *Latinos and Education: Explaining the Attainment Gap.* Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center.

Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce. (2012). How Immigration Leads to Economic Growth and American Jobs: MN Business Perspective. Retrieved from http://www.demography.state.mn.us/index.html

Minnesota Department of Education. (2010-2011). Carl Perkins Core Indicator: State Basic 4S1-NCLB Grad Rate.

Minnesota Department of Education. (2011, July 29). *Costs and Consequences of Dropping Out of School*.

Minnesota Department of Education. (2011). *English Learner Education Guidelines.* Retrieved September 2012, from Minnesota Deparment of Education: http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/EngLearnSup/EngLearnEducGuide/index.html

Minnesota Department of Education. (2012). 2002-03 Graduation Indicators. Roseville, MN, U.S.A. Retrieved August 2012, from http://education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp

Minnesota Department of Education. (2012). 2005-06 Enrollment by Gender/Ethnicity. Roseville, MN, U.S.A. Retrieved August 2012, from http://education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp

Minnesota Department of Education. (2012). 2005-06 Enrollment by Special Populations. Roseville, MN, U.S.A. Retrieved August 2012, from http://education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp

Minnesota Department of Education. (2012). 2010-11 Graduation Indicators. Roseville, MN, U.S.A. Retrieved August 2012, from http://education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp

Minnesota Department of Education. (2012). 2011-12 Enrollment by Ethnicity/Gender. Roseville, MN, U.S.A. Retrieved August 2012, from education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp

Minnesota Department of Education. (2012). 2011-12 Enrollment by Special Populations. Roseville, MN, U.S.A. Retrieved August 2012, from http://education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp

Minnesota Humanities Center and Chicano Latino Affairs Council. (2010, August 23). Closing the Achievement Gap Within the Latino Community.

Minnesota Legislative Campaign for Achievement Now: MinnCAN. (2012). *The Stat of MN Public Education.".* Minnesota Legislative Campaign for Achievement Now: MinnCAN.

Monkman, K., Ronald, M., & Theramene, F. D. (2005). Social and Cultural Capital in and Urban Latino School Community. *Urban Education, Volume 40 No. 1*, 4-33.

Monzó, L. D., & Rueda, R. S. (2001 йил August). Professional Roles, Caring, and Scaffolds: Latino Teachers' and Paraeducators' Interactions with Latino Students. *American Journal of Education, 109*(4), 438-471.

Murillo, E. G., Villenas, S. A., Munoz, J. S., Martinez, C., & Machado-Casas, M. (2010). *Handbook of Latinos and Education: Theory, Research, and Practice.* New York, NY, U.S.A.: Routledge.

Perez, W. (2012). *Americans by heart: Undocumented Latino students and the promise of higher education.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Pew Hispanic Center. (2009). *Between Two Worlds: How Young Latinos Come of Age in America.* Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Raffaelli, M., Carlo, G., Carranza, M. A., & Gonzalez-Kruger, G. E. (Fall 2005). Understanding Latino Children and Adolescents in the Mainstream: Placing CUlture at the Center of Developmental Models. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, no. 109*, 23-32.

Reeves, D. B. (2003). High Performance in High Poverty Schools: 90/90/90 and Beyond. Center for Performance Assessment.

Rodriguez, M. C., & Morrobel, D. (2004). A Review of Latino Youth Development Research and a Call for an Asset Orientation. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 26 No. 2*, 107-127.

Rodriguez, T. L. (2011). Stories of self, stories of practice: enacting a vision of socially just pedagogy for Latino youth. *Teaching Education, 22:3*, 239-354.

Rosario, J. R. (2006). *On Engaging Latino Students in their Education : A Resource guide to Research and Programs.* Indianapolis, IN: El Puente Publications.

Rosario, J., & Rosario, C. (2008). Latino Families, Communities, and Schools as Partners in Education Best Practice Models and Why They Work. *Latino Educational Equity: A Compendium of Three Essays on Best Practices in latino Education in the United States*, 27-58.

Rosenbaum, J. (2008). Work Readiness, Skill Development, and Signaling Processes. *Latino Educational Equity: A Compendium of Three Essays on Best Practices in latino Education in the United States*, 59-78.

Sattin-Bajaj, C., & Suárez-Orozco, M. (n.d.). *English Language Learner Students and Charter Schools in New York State: Challenges and Opportunities.*

Schmidt, C. (2001). Educational Achievement, Language Minority Students, and the New Second Generation. *Sociology of Education Extra Issue*, 71-87.

Scientific American. (2011, February 18). Being Multilingual Helps with Multitasking.

Search Institute. (2012, October). *Developmental Assets*. Retrieved from Search Institute: http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets

Solorzano, D. G. (2002). Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research. *Qualitaive Inquiry, Volume 8 Number 1*, 23-44.

Soltero, S. (2008). Immigrants, Latinos, and Education in the United States. *Latino Educational Equity: A Compendium of Three Essays on Best Practices in latino Education in the United States*, 9-26.

State Demographic Center. (2012, October). Saint Paul, MN, U.S.A.

Vick, R. &.-L. (2008). Academic Success Strategy Use Among Community-Active Urban Hispanic Adolescents. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 30, 4*, 463-480.

Violand-Sanchez, E., & Hainer-Violand, J. (September 2006). The Power of Positive Identity. *Educational Leadership*, 36-40.

Vitrella, A. (2012). *The Finnish education Model: And How It Compares to Minnesota District and Chartered Schools.* The Center for Policy Studies, Education Evolving.

Weber, T. (2012, May 7). Analysis: More Minn students. Saint Paul, MN, U.S.A. Retrieved from http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2012/05/07/daily-circuit-free-reduced-lunch-achievement-gap/

Weiner, L. (2000). *Helping Hispanic students reach high academic standards: An idea book.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Woolley, M. K. (2009). The Social Context of School Success for Latino Middle School Students: Direct and Indirect Influences of Teachers, Family, and Friends. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 29,1*, 43-70.

Yakushko, O. (2008). Xenophobia: Understanding the Roots and Consequences of Negative Attitudes Toward Immigrants. *The Counseling Psychologist, 37:1*, 36-66.

Appendix 6: Interview Questions

Interview Questions- Program leaders:

1. How do you define educational success?
    a. How does your definition of success compare to official definitions or standards?
2. What are the things that are most effective at contributing to the success of Latino students?
    a. What programs have been effective- both school programs and programs outside of schools? What is it about these programs that make them effective?
    b. What are some of the ways your program has been successful?
3. How does the Latino culture or heritage contribute to the academic success of students? What assets in the community can be used to improve educational outcomes for Latino students?
    a. Again, probe for examples.
4. What are some of the ways schools and educational programs address the challenges Latino students face, for example, language, economic situation, cultural differences? [interviewer's note: be sure to focus this discussion in a positive direction- if interviewees focus on challenges ask how the issues they talk about have been effectively addressed and how they think they should be addressed.]
5. What role do educators (for example teachers or youth workers) play in the educational success of Latino students?
    a. How important is it for Latino educators specifically to work with students? How can non-Latino educators support these programs and contribute to the success of Latino students?
    b. What role does other school staff, like counselors, play in the educational success of Latino students?
6. How has your program been successful in engaging and supporting families?
    a. Stories
7. In what ways does the school/program work with the community?
8. What kinds of policies would support these programs or educational success for Latino students?

Interview Questions- Students:

1. How do you define educational success?
    a. You have been identified as "successful" student. How would you say that you have been successful academically?
    b. Tell me your story. What was your education like and what contributed to your success as a student?
    c. How did you make the decision to pursue [educational activities, advanced level classes]? Who influenced this decision (your family, peers, educators, councilors, mentors)? (extracurricular activities, advanced level classes)? How did participation in this help you achieve your educational aspirations?
2. What are the things that are most effective at contributing to the success of Latino students and your own success personally?
    a. What does/did your school do to support you? How did programs outside of school help you to be successful?
    b. Tell me a story about how these programs or program elements [name specific examples from conversation] have contributed to your success.
3. *[How does the Latino culture or heritage contribute to the academic success of students? What assets in the community can be used to improve educational outcomes for Latino students?]*(use the questions below)
    a. What are some elements of your culture that make you proud?
    b. How does/did your school use things from your culture to help (Latino?) students succeed?
    c. How did your parents or people from the community help you succeed? What role did your Latino culture play in this?
        i. Support, respect
    d. Again, probe for stories.
    e. Family, religion, church as community resource
4. *[What are some of the ways schools and educational programs address the challenges Latino students face, for example, language, economic situation, or cultural differences?]*
    [Interviewer's note: be sure to focus this discussion in a positive direction- if interviewees are compelled to "vent" ask how the issues they talk about have been effectively addressed and how they think they should be addressed.]
    a. What were some of the challenges you faced as a student and how did your school, family, or community help you?
5. How did "educators-" your teachers, other adults in the school, or youth workers help you to be successful?
    a. How important is it for Latino educators to work with students? How can non-Latino educators support programs and help Latino students be successful?
    b. Give me an example where an educator helped you succeed?
6. How have your school/program been successful in engaging and supporting your family?
    a. Tell me about a time when this helped you succeed.
7. In what ways does the school/program work with the community?
8. What kinds of laws or rules would support these programs or educational success for Latino students?
    a. What else will help students to improve educational attainment or educational success? What changes?