

Understanding Opportunities to Learn for Latino Students in Washington

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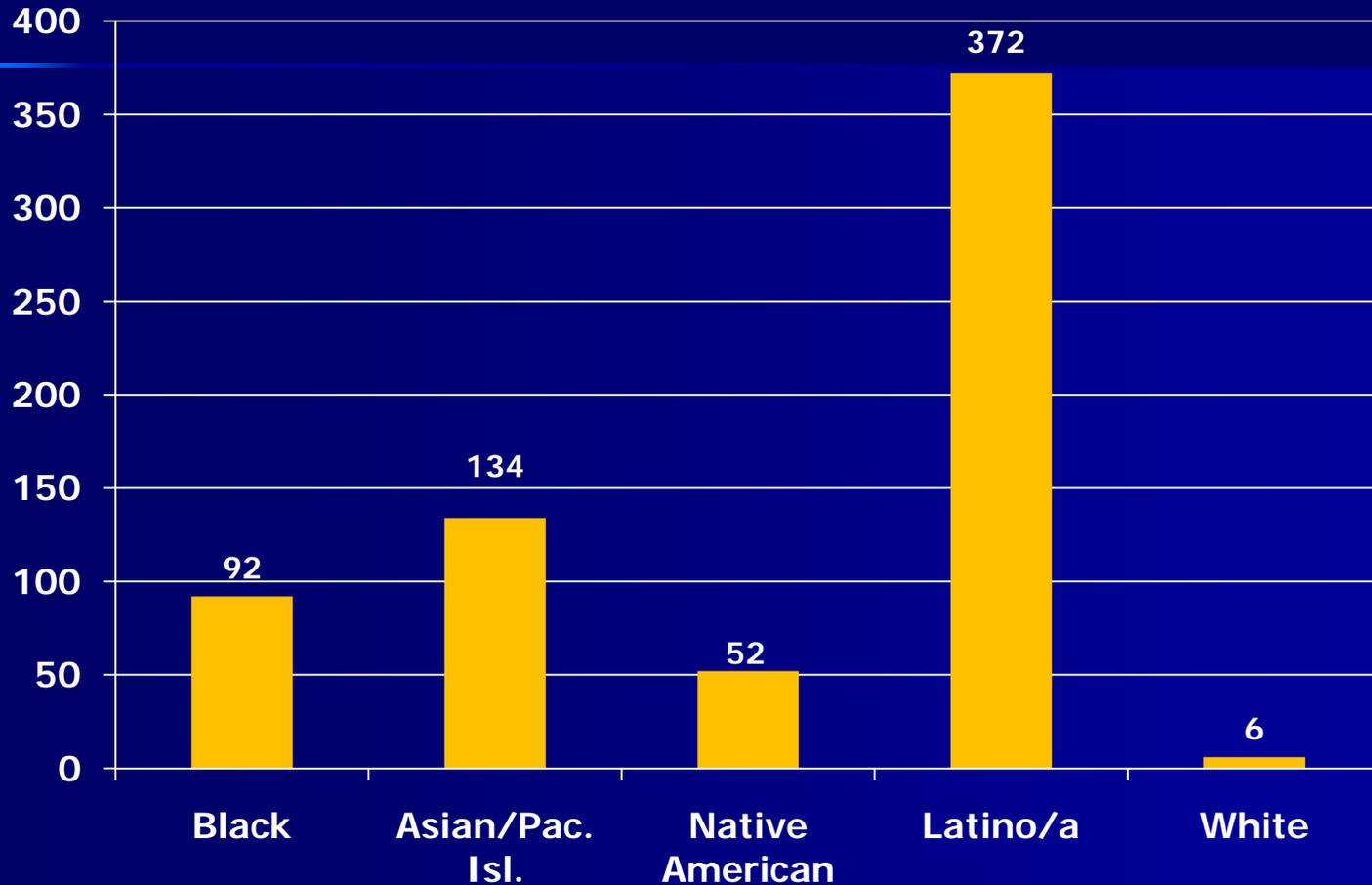
Prepared for the Commission on Hispanic Affairs

January 15, 2009

Background

- Latinos represent approximately 14% of the K-12 population yet, only 4.2 percent of students enrolled in WA four-year public universities.
- Only 56.5% of Latinos graduated high school in 2006 in WA below an overall national average of 70.6% for all students
- Latino students constitute approximately 20% of today's kindergartner population in WA
- If the inequitable opportunities to learn are not addressed, we will likely see lower education levels among Latinos and negative economic consequences on the State of WA

Latino Population Growth WA State K-12 Public School Enrollment 1986-2007 (Percent)



Research Questions

- Do Latino students possess the same opportunities to learn as their peers in both urban, suburban and rural contexts?
 - What efforts or programs exist to ensure equity among all students, with respect to curriculum, resources, services, etc.?
 - Are there differential achievement levels and curricular opportunities for Latino students in comparison to their peers?
- What are the perceptions of parents and students with respect to their experience in school and with school staff?
- What are viable policy recommendations for raising Latino academic achievement in the state of Washington?

Methods and Data Sources

- Mixed-Method Study
 - Quantitative—Survey
 - Qualitative –Interviews and Focus Groups
- Secondary data analysis of OSPI data on WASL achievement, SAT & ACT, & UW data
- Student Survey of 8th grade and 10th grade students from October –November 20, 2008
- Latino Parent Survey
- Teacher Survey & interviews
- Latino Teacher Survey

Key Priority Areas based on Research Findings

- 1) A comprehensive data system and evaluation framework
- 2) Teachers and instruction
- 3) Student support
- 4) Parent engagement and involvement
- 5) A seamless P-20 continuum

Findings & Recommendations

Student Support

Key Finding #1

Latino student achievement on the WASL is consistently low in all areas, particularly math. This pattern of achievement is also seen in college entrance exams such as the ACT or SAT. For ELL students, achievement levels are even lower, and do not significantly increase as the student progresses through high school, making them unlikely to pass the WASL exit exam.

Policy Recommendations:

- Increase access to curricular resources, access to materials, and personnel, to support academic achievement.
- Remove the use of the WASL as an exit exam for high school graduation.

Findings & Recommendations

Comprehensive Data & Evaluation System

Key Finding #2: A comprehensive data and evaluation system is not readily available that monitors annual student achievement and progress longitudinally. Researchers are unable to conduct cohort data analysis, monitor access to curriculum, or to closely monitor student progress using multiple measures.

Policy Recommendations:

- Conduct an audit of school districts with Latino school populations of 25 percent or higher, or with more than 1,000 Latino students, in order to understand the capacity that exists for serving ELL and Latino students in the state.
- Develop a statewide comprehensive evaluation framework to be utilized by schools and districts to examine opportunities to learn for Latinos and ELL students who are not achieving at grade level.

Findings & Recommendations

Student Support

Key Finding #3: Cohort graduation rates among Latino students were approximately 56 percent in 2006, using Swanson's (2004) CPI method. The state of Washington is losing close to half of its Latino students before high school graduation.

Policy Recommendations:

- The state needs to closely and accurately monitor graduation rates for all students using a cohort model, and establish tangible goals to significantly reduce the Latino dropout rate significantly by 2014.
- The courses taken and credits earned at the time of drop out need to be reported and factored into the calculation of dropouts..

Findings & Recommendations

Teachers & Instruction

Key Finding # 4: There is shortage of bilingual, bicultural teachers in the state of Washington despite rapid demographic growth in the ELL student population.

Policy Recommendations:

- Increase teacher diversity by calling for teacher training programs and colleges of education in the state to develop an infrastructure for a "grow your own" program of bilingual/bicultural teachers, and provide teachers with incentives, such as full tuition scholarships, to work in regions where first generation families live.
- Require all future teachers in Washington State to develop competencies related to meeting the instructional and socio-cultural needs of ELL students to obtain a teaching certificate.
- Require current teachers to participate in cultural competence training and support teachers to attend these professional development opportunities both locally and nationally.

Findings & Recommendations

Teachers & Instruction

Key Finding #5: There is a disconcerting lack of clarity around models used for ELL instruction and a considerable variation regarding the use of paraprofessionals in the schools with high Latino concentrations.

Policy Recommendations:

- Change state teacher certification to require that initial licensure include training on meeting the needs of ELL students and provide for ongoing professional development on effective pedagogical strategies to raise achievement levels among ELL students.
- Paraprofessionals should not be allowed to substitute for teachers in Washington classrooms. The statewide evaluation framework recommended above would serve to monitor these practices.
- Invest in paraprofessionals currently working in high concentration Latino school districts to earn their degrees and become certified teachers, and work with districts to provide necessary release time.

Findings & Recommendations

Parent Engagement & Involvement

Key Finding #6: Latino parents experience a considerable level of isolation with schools, in part due to a language barrier, but also largely due to an environment in the schools where parents feel unwelcome.

Policy Recommendation:

- The state should require schools and districts (in addition to those required by federal grant requirements) to communicate effectively with parents whose first language is not English, and utilize multiple approaches of communication. Specifically, the state should require: 1) correspondence be sent home translated in English and Spanish; 2) translators should be offered for parents who do not speak English; 3) greater efforts by school staff should be made to verbally communicate with parents over the phone and in person; and 4) Require school districts to utilize a common, state-developed instrument for principals and parents to determine their effectiveness in communicating with parents whose first language is not English.

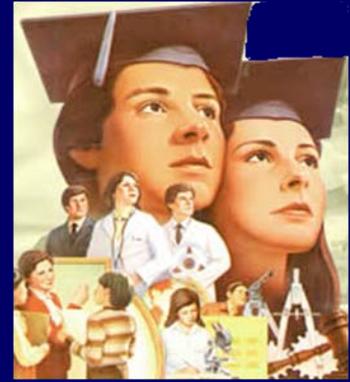
Findings & Recommendations

Seamless P-20 Continuum

Key Finding #7: A seamless continuum to college does not exist for Latino students. In particular, information about college and financial aid for students is lacking, especially for 1079 students.

Policy Recommendations:

- Promote early knowledge about college for Latino students and their parents by hosting parent workshops with information provided in English and Spanish.
- Education about HB 1079 should start prior to high school.
- Audit the implementation of HB 1079 in higher education systems to determine whether college and university admissions offices are responsibly implementing the law as intended by the state Legislature.
- Allow students who qualify as 1079 students to compete for state-funded need grant financial aid.



Questions??

For more information:

[http://education.washington.edu/research/
centers/proyecto_acceso/](http://education.washington.edu/research/centers/proyecto_acceso/)