

Coupling Changing Student Demographics with Evidence-Based Leadership Practices: Leading
Hispanic Friendly Learning Organizations

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Abstract

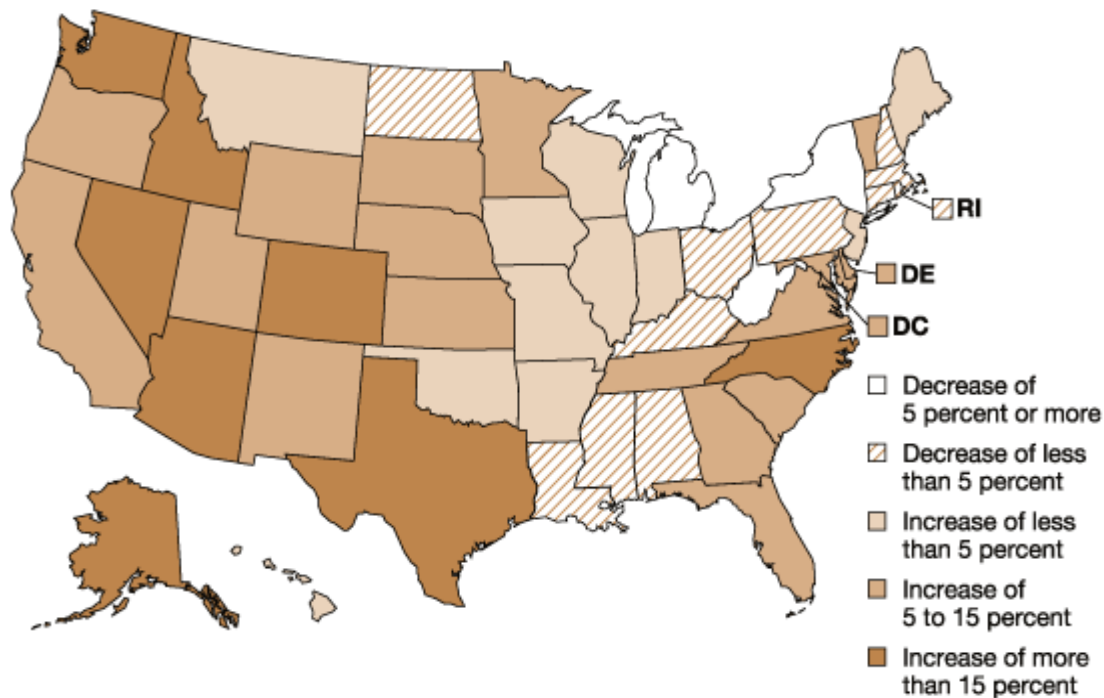
The study assessed the need for learning organizations to implement evidence-based policies and practices designed to enhance the academic and social success of Hispanic learners. Descriptive statistics and longitudinal data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) and the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA) were used to identify trends that have impacted educational institutions over the last decade. NCES enrollment projections were then identified to be used as policy indicators leading to evidence-based strategic planning. The exponential growth in the Hispanic student population that has already occurred in the Southwest, and is projected to occur in many other parts of the country, will necessitate evidence-based leadership practices if institutions are to become, or remain, Hispanic friendly learning organizations.

Coupling Changing Student Demographics with Evidence-Based Leadership Practices: Leading Hispanic Friendly Learning Organizations

Rapidly changing student demographics in the very near future will pose both challenges and opportunities for educational institutions across the country. The Hispanic student population enrolled in elementary and secondary public schools is currently large and continues to grow rapidly. Garcia and Jensen (2009) found that “Young Hispanic children are not only the largest racial/ethnic group in the U.S., but also the youngest and fastest-growing” (p. 3). The Hispanic student population enrolled in elementary and secondary public schools is projected to increase nationally by 25 percent between 2010 and 2020 (NCES, 2011). It is important that educational institutions proactively prepare respective policies and leadership practices to meet the changing student needs associated with this substantial demographic shift in student populations. It is likely that both the lessons learned through both the academic failures, and the successful, evidence-based policies and practices that were implemented in fast growth states, could benefit additional states on the verge of substantial student enrollment shifts.

A recent national study (ACT, Inc., 2010) on the retention of Hispanic learners in community colleges with at least 20% Hispanic student population detailed the importance of placement based on test scores, tutoring, and developmental coursework. Descriptive statistics and longitudinal data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) and the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA) identified trends that have impacted educational institutions over the last decade. Many states across the country are projected by NCES to experience substantial growth in their respective Hispanic student populations between 2006 and 2018. Such substantive growth will necessitate a culturally relevant pedagogy instituted as a result of evidenced-based leadership practices.

Figure 4. Projected percentage change in enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by state: Fall 2008 through fall 2020



NOTE: Calculations are based on unrounded numbers. Mean absolute percentage errors of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools by state and region can be found in [table A-7, appendix A](#).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education,” 2008–09; and State Elementary and Secondary Enrollment Model, 1980–2008. (This figure was prepared February 2011.)

Study findings such as the U.S. Department of Education published *What Works for Latino Students* (2000) provide leaders with evidence-based practices that positively impact the achievement of Hispanic learners. Recommendations include providing parental access to

social services and community resources, ensuring Latino presence among professional staff, providing leadership opportunities for Hispanic learners, ensuring a balanced integration of Latino cultural awareness in the curriculum, and the development of strong Hispanic student support networks. In a similar study, Madrid (2011) found several variables related to student achievement among Hispanic learners.

In accordance with the study, related variables included

- curriculum rigor;
- role of the teacher;
- class size;
- resources;
- parent participation; and
- environmental issues such as poverty, nutrition, and school safety (Madrid, 2011, p. 8).

Madrid further found that high expectations, meaningful relationships, and time on task were important factors related to student achievement among Hispanic students, especially low performing students. The practice of fostering social interactions and emotional development was recommended for children from minority language backgrounds (NCELA, 2011). Such social interactions provided students with opportunities to develop language skills and strengthen self-image development. A study by Quioncho and Daoud (2006) revealed that while Hispanic parents held high expectations regarding their children's academic achievement, many felt excluded from the school community. In an effort to increase the involvement of Hispanic parents in the school community, Huerta and Mari (2011) conducted a study that invited urban Hispanic parents and students to foster literacy through a culturally relevant folk medicine event.

The researchers found that the parents, many of whom were recent immigrants who only spoke Spanish, gained an enhanced understanding of the connections between school literacy and home life. Both the students and the parents were found to benefit from the culturally relevant modes of literacy. Such genuine respect for the cultural values embodied in school community partnership activities served as a bridge between home and school, and ultimately helped students in the process. Villalba, Brunelli, Lewis, & Wachter (2007) found community involvement to be beneficial to Hispanic students in burgeoning Latino communities. Such partnerships foster both shared ownership and shared responsibility for the success of the students of the community.

Hispanic students' school readiness was found to be more important than chronological age on second grade achievement testing (Furlong & Quirk, 2011). The study examined low-income students of Hispanic descent as they moved from kindergarten through second grade. Students who had higher levels of school readiness continued to perform at higher levels of student achievement through the second grade, regardless of their age or pre-school setting. School readiness was more important than age or pre-school experience. The type of English language development program was also important to young Hispanic English as a second language (ESL) students. A study conducted by Lopez (2010) found Hispanic students enrolled in bilingual education classes to have higher scholastic competence than those enrolled in structured English immersion classes. Another study that focused on two-way immersion bilingual education in Catholic schools found that Spanish speaking students who developed advanced reading, writing, and speaking skills in Spanish attained higher scores in English than Spanish speaking students who focused exclusively on English skills development (Scanian & Zehrbach, 2010). The study further found that when students viewed their native language skills

as an asset, the students realized academic benefits. High levels of bilingualism were found to be associated with enhanced cognitive abilities.

Shiu, Kettler, and Johnsen (2009) found that at-risk, native Spanish speaking Hispanic middle school students enrolled in an AP Spanish course enjoyed benefits from the experience. The researchers found the at-risk students, “made friends with peers who cared more about grades, enjoyed reading in English, and were more optimistic about their future family, future job, and their service to the community” (p. 59). The findings of the study suggested that Spanish-speaking skills were viewed by students as a strength rather than a liability. The study subjects viewed their Spanish-speaking skills as a tool to help them achieve academic success. Cavazos, Cavazos, Hinojosa, & Silva (2009) found that school counselors could use positive aspects of the Hispanic culture, such as religion and family, to help students form more positive identities. Lys (2009) found that comprehensive transition plans from middle school to high school, the encouragement to participate in extracurricular activities, the use of coaching and mentoring programs, and the strengthening of home-school relations to decrease the number of high school dropouts among the Hispanic student population. Lys also cited the importance of providing meaningful professional development focused on culturally relevant instruction to the instructional staff.

Neseth, Savage, and Navarro (2009) found social support to be important among Hispanic learners. The study examined the impact of acculturation and perceived social support on the mathematics achievement of Hispanic high school students. The researchers found positive correlations between teacher and peer support and student achievement in the area of mathematics. Teacher support was found to be the more highly correlated to student achievement than peer support. Teacher student relationships, whether positive or negative,

were found to influence Latina/o student experiences (Cammarota, 2006). Malagon (2010) found that educators teaching Hispanic students needed to understand the culturally relevant literacy of the students they taught. Cultural relevance helped to deconstruct the racial discourses that could occur in the classroom setting. Davilla (2010) found that the lack of culturally relevant curriculum effected the identity formation of a sample of Puerto Rican high school students. Cammarota and Romero (2006) found that educators needed to become personal with Hispanic students in order to build relational trust. Some students wanted to trust the educator before they would open up and communicate with the instructor at a meaningful level. Archuleta, Castillo, & King (2006) found an online university counseling program to be an effect means of support for Latina high school students in rural settings. In order to reach a higher percentage of Hispanic students, educators must “celebrate, endorse, respect, and internalize that which is specific to Latino populations” (Stein, 2005, p. 85).

By the year 2025, “22 percent of the college-age population will be Hispanic” (Santiago & Brown, p. 2). Borrero (2011) found that that first generation Hispanic college-bound students found great pride in both themselves and their respective families. The students attributed credit to their respective families for supporting them and helping them get accepted into college. These successful students placed a high value on their families. According to Perez-Huber (2010), highly successful undocumented Chicana undergraduate college students strongly benefited from the various forms of capital they received from their parents, extended families, and their communities. Alders and Levine-Madori (2010) found art therapy to improve results on cognitive evaluation tests among older adult Hispanics. Mental stimulation was found to be beneficial to the subjects of the study. “Changes in modern families have increased the urgency for educators to learn to look beyond the walls of the classroom, engaging parents and

communities as partners in designing, implementing, and evaluating educational policies and curricula” (de la Piedra, Munter, & Giron, 2006, p. 58).

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