



IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTCOMES FOR LATINO STUDENTS

As the nation's largest minority group, Latinos number more than 11 million students in America's public elementary and secondary schools and constitute more than 22 percent of all pre-K–12 students. More than one in five students enrolled in America's schools is Latino. Yet, only about half of all Latino students earn their high school diploma on time; those who do complete high school are only half as likely as their peers to be prepared for college. Only 13 percent of Latinos hold a bachelor's degree, and just 4 percent have completed graduate or professional degree programs.

President Obama is working to reform America's schools and to build a world-class education system that will deliver the complete and competitive education needed to prepare every child for college and a career. As the Obama Administration works to re-shape K-12 education, to invest in innovation, and to develop new solutions for closing the achievement gap, the work of education reform can have a profound effect on America's Latino communities.

On Tuesday, President Obama will sign a new Executive Order to establish the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. Since May, 2009, the White House Initiative has been gathering input from across the country to identify the key challenges and priorities of the education system with respect to the Latino community. Already, the Obama Administration has made advances to address many of these priorities, including:

RAISING THE BAR: PROMOTING EARLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LATINOS

The years before kindergarten are the most critical for shaping a child's foundation for later learning and America's economic competitiveness depends on providing a high-quality learning environment for every child before they reach the kindergarten door. Compared to other minority groups, Latino children represent the largest segment of young children in the nation, but fewer than half are enrolled in center-based early education programs. By age two, Latino children are less likely than their non-Latino peers to demonstrate expressive vocabulary skills. Preschool-aged Latino children also exhibit lower average scores in language and mathematics knowledge than their non-Latino peers.

- President Obama has launched a comprehensive zero-to-five plan – to dramatically expand early childhood education and continue to improve its quality – aimed at supporting the health, well-being, and future educational success of our children.
- The Obama Administration has invested \$5 billion in early learning through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, to bolster the existing framework of federal programs and services to reach our youngest children, including **Head Start, Early Head Start, child care and IDEA** services for infants, toddlers and preschool-aged children. Nineteen percent of the nation's child care subsidy recipients are Latino children, and 33 percent of the nation's Head Start children are Latino.
- Each day, over 11 million children under the age of five spend time outside of the care of their parents, and in a wide variety of environments – each of which should promote and encourage their early learning and development. The Obama Administration's proposed **Early Learning**

Challenge Fund (ELCF) would issue a challenge to states to establish model systems of early learning and to fund and implement pathways that will improve access to high-quality programs, to ensure that a greater share of children enter kindergarten prepared for success.

RACE TO THE TOP: ADVANCING EXCELLENCE AND DRIVING REFORM

The Obama Administration's **Race to the Top** program dedicates \$4 billion to spur systemic reform and to help states embrace changes in education policies and practices that will improve teaching and learning in America's schools. A total of 46 states plus the District of Columbia applied to compete for a Race to the Top award, including over 30 states that made significant changes in laws or policies to promote education reforms consistent with the principles reflected under the program. President Obama has proposed to expand the competition to additional states and school districts in his 2011 budget, requesting an additional \$1.35 billion.

- The 12 states that have been selected as Race to the Top winners – including Florida, New York, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Delaware, Rhode Island, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio and the District of Columbia– reach approximately 22 percent of the nation's Latino student population.
- The Obama Administration has also awarded \$330 million to support two consortia of states as they work to replace the current assessments with others that are more rigorous and of higher quality, aligned to college- and career-readiness, measure student growth, and are more useful to teachers, parents and students. From the beginning, these tests will be designed to fully include English language learners and to ensure that they are appropriately assessed.

PREPARING LATINO STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS

In today's global economy, educating every American student to graduate from high school prepared for college and for a career is a national imperative. The President has articulated this as the goal of America once again having the highest proportion of college graduates by the year 2020. To achieve this goal, our Administration has advanced four reforms: improving access to rigorous standards that prepare students for college and a career, and to assessments that accurately measure student learning growth; ensuring that all students, including our neediest students, are taught by the great teachers they need, in schools led by effective school leaders; ensuring better data and information to follow student learning and to inform teaching; and implementing strategies to transform and improve those schools that have been persistently low-performing. Undertaking these reforms will require both hard work and new ideas to support continuous and sustained improvement – both innovation and implementation.

The Obama Administration's **Investing in Innovation Fund** dedicates \$650 million to support the development and scaling-up of innovative educational models and solutions that help close achievement gaps and improve outcomes for high-need students. Through a competitive preference to applicants who focused on serving English language learners, several of the winning applications under the Fund will incorporate plans to improve the achievement of English language learners, including:

- The Saint Vrain Valley School District in Longmont, Colorado, which will implement a project to address the unmet needs of Latino and English language learners at Skyline High School and its feeder schools. Elementary students will improve their literacy skills through focused supports and expanded learning time; middle school students will improve their mathematics skills and knowledge with math labs and an augmented school year; high school students will have improved science learning opportunities through a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) certification track.

- The Exploratorium in San Francisco, California, which will work with Sonoma Valley schools on a five-year project to refine and implement a professional development approach to increase the percentage of elementary teachers who are highly effective in supporting the science learning of English language learners.

In September, the Obama Administration announced planning grants for 21 nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education under **Promise Neighborhoods**, a program designed to support a cradle-through-college continuum of services to meet the educational challenges of students growing up in high-poverty communities. Several grantees will develop plans to improve the learning, educational success, and healthy development of students in Latino communities, including:

- The Eastside Promise Neighborhood project in San Antonio, where the United Way will enlist and engage partners to work with five schools and an early childhood center serving an ethnically diverse neighborhood with a Latino majority and a growing Mexican immigrant population. This project will improve parent engagement, provide professional development to preschool and school staff, and deliver resources for economic redevelopment and housing.
- The Community Day Care Center in Lawrence, MA, which will work with several schools to develop sustainable educational supports and solutions in a community that is 68 percent Latino, and in which 40 percent of adults lack a high school diploma.
- Proyecto Pastoral at Dolores Mission, which will work in the 30-block Boyle Heights area in Los Angeles, a community where more than 90 percent of residents are Latino and one-third of families are below the poverty line.

Research clearly demonstrates that as students fall behind academically, the probability that they will drop out increases. Latino students experience an unacceptably high dropout rate – a challenge exacerbated by the middle school achievement gap and by the fact that more than one-third of Latino high school students are academically below grade level.

To help place a greater share of Latino students on track to college and careers, the Obama Administration is dedicating over \$4 billion in **School Improvement Grants** to challenge states and districts to implement bold reforms that will transform the 5,000 lowest-performing schools in America. These grants will provide up to \$6 million per school over three years to dramatically turn around our nation’s lowest-performing schools into safe environments where students are learning.

- More than 500 schools across the country are already participating in the Obama Administration’s School Improvement Grants program.
- This program strives to bring resources and needed change to many of the high schools across the country, which produce 75 percent of Latino and African-American dropouts.

IMPROVING COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESS FOR LATINOS

Today, a higher education is not just a pathway to opportunity – it is a prerequisite. Over the next decade, nearly eight in ten new job openings in the U.S. will require some workforce training or postsecondary education. And of the thirty fastest growing occupations in America, half require at least a 4-year college degree. Rising levels of education are critical to creating shared economic growth.

America once had one of the most educated workforces in the world but our levels of educational attainment have stagnated – with only 40 percent of young adults having a college degree, we now rank ninth in the world in college completion. While close to 70 percent of high school graduates in the United States enroll in

college within two years, only 57 percent graduate within six years. For low-income and minority students, the completion rate is closer to 45 percent. Students from high-income families are almost eight times as likely as their low-income peers to earn a bachelors degree by age 24. Closing this college attainment gap is critical to restoring America's standing as a global leader in higher education.

In March, the President signed the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act (HCERA) to help address college affordability, access and success, and to regain America's standing as a world leader in higher education by the end of the next decade. This legislation will help the nation reach the President's goal, in part by putting college in reach for a greater number of Latino students:

- **Federal Financial Aid that Puts Students First.** By shifting the nation's student aid system to the Direct Loans program, the legislation ends wasteful subsidies to banks and uses the savings to strengthen and stabilize funding for America's Pell Grant recipients. The investments in the Pell Grant under HCERA, coupled with the President's previous investments, more than double the amount of funding available to Pell Grants, growing the award from \$4,730 in 2008 to \$5,550 today. By academic year 2020-2021, it is estimated that more than 150,000 additional Pell Grant awards would be made to Latino students due to the changes in the law.
- **More Affordable Student Loans.** To ensure that Americans can better manage their student loan payments, the HCERA provides student borrowers new choices in how they repay their loans, including an income-based repayment option to cap monthly repayments at 10 percent of income for borrowers after 2014, and to have loans forgiven after 20 years. Public service workers – such as teachers, nurses, and those in military service – will see any remaining debt forgiven after 10 years. It is estimated that this expanded benefit will benefit approximately 143,000 Latino borrowers between 2014 and 2020.
- **Building American Skills Through Community Colleges.** President Obama has proposed ushering in new innovations and reforms for the nation's community colleges to raise graduation rates, build industry partnerships, expand course offerings, and improve career and educational pathways. The HCERA includes a \$2 billion investment to help America's community colleges develop, improve, and expand education and career training to workers.
- **Strengthening Hispanic-Serving Institutions.** Over half of America's Latino undergraduates attend a Hispanic-Serving Institution – that is, a public or private nonprofit college or university that has a student body that is at least 25 percent Latino. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) serve a higher proportion of low- and middle-income students than their peer institutions, and together they enroll nearly sixty percent of the nation's 4.7 million minority undergraduate students. To better reach the President's 2020 goal, the HCERA invests over \$2.55 billion in these institutions over the next decade – including \$1 billion at America's HSIs. This funding can be used to renew, reform, and expand higher education programs to ensure that Latinos are provided every chance to rise to their full potential, earn their degrees, and enter or re-enter the workforce.

HISTORY OF THE WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE

First established in September of 1990, the Initiative was created to advise the Secretary of Education on issues related to Hispanics and to address academic excellence and opportunities for the Hispanic Community. In May of 2009, President Obama appointed Juan Sepúlveda as Executive Director to the Office of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.