



WINNING THE FUTURE: IMPROVING EDUCATION FOR THE LATINO COMMUNITY

In his State of the Union, the President laid out his vision for America to win the future. He made it clear that the most important contest this country faces today is not between Democrats and Republicans, but with competitors around the world for the jobs and industries of our time. To win that contest and secure prosperity for Latinos and all Americans, we must out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world. The Latino community plays an integral part of that plan to win the future.

Latinos are by far the largest minority group in the American public education system today numbering more than 12 million in the country's elementary, middle and high schools. Currently, more than 22 percent or slightly more than one in five of all pre-K–12 students enrolled in America's public schools is Latino. Yet, less than half of Latino children are enrolled in any early learning program; 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 have a bachelor's degree, and just 4 percent have completed graduate or professional degree programs. Overall, Latinos have the lowest education attainment level of any group in the U.S.

To compete in this 21st-century global economy and give our children the best possible chance to succeed, we must win the race to educate our children. President Obama has challenged us to once again be number one in the world by 2020 in the percentage of our population with a college degree. We cannot achieve this goal as a nation without significantly increasing the education attainment level of Latinos, the country's largest and fastest growing minority group. In short, the future of education in the U.S. is inextricably tied to the future of the Latino community, which means we must invest in strengthening and expanding education opportunities for all Latino students, from cradle to career.

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 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** 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** 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.

BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM: ESEA REAUTHORIZATION

The Obama Administration released *A Blueprint for Reform*, a proposal for reauthorizing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (currently known as *No Child Left Behind*). This reauthorization offers a major opportunity to prepare and support teachers and leaders so they can be more effective in: turning around low-performing schools; developing comprehensive approaches to meeting student needs; starting innovative new schools; and supporting high-quality instructional systems in literacy, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and all the components of a well-rounded education.

RACE TO THE TOP: ADVANCING EXCELLENCE AND DRIVING REFORM

The Obama Administration’s **Race to the Top** program dedicates \$4.35 billion to spur systemic reform and to embrace changes in education policies and practices that will improve four areas of enormous importance to Latino students: 1) adopting rigorous standards and assessments; 2) recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers; 3) turning around low-performing schools; and 4) establishing data systems to track student achievement and teacher effectiveness. A total of 46 states plus the District of Columbia applied to compete for a Race to the Top award, including 32 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 local school districts in his 2012 budget, requesting \$900 million for a new Race to the Top competition.

- The 11 states and one district that have been selected as Race to the Top winners—Tennessee, Delaware, Rhode Island, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and the District of Columbia—reach approximately 22 percent of the nation’s Latino student population. Five of the fifteen states with the largest Hispanic

populations won—Florida (3rd), New York (4th), Georgia (10th), North Carolina (11th) and Massachusetts (15th). Many Latino-heavy states almost won, including California, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The President’s proposed investment in another round of funding would allow all these competitive states to apply again. Texas, which did not apply, would also be eligible and school districts themselves could put forth proposals so schools, like those in Texas, would not be penalized because their states refuse to participate.

- 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** dedicated \$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, Colo., 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 STEM certification track.
- The Exploratorium in San Francisco, 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 2010, 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. President Obama has proposed \$150 million in his 2012 budget to support implementation of Promise Neighborhood projects. 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, Mass., 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 1 in 20 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.

- Approximately 5,000 schools, or 5 percent of the total, linger as persistently low-performing schools—schools that have failed to make academic progress year after year.
- At the high school level, roughly 2,000 schools—about 12 percent of all high schools—produce nearly half of our nation's dropouts, and up to 75 percent of minority students, including Latinos.
- Nearly 1,000 schools across the country have received funding through the Obama Administration's School Improvement Program. Approximately 40 percent of these are high schools, and 22 percent serve middle school students.

IMPROVING COLLEGE ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY AND COMPLETION FOR LATINOS

Today, a higher education is not just a pathway to opportunity—it is a prerequisite. Over the next decade, nearly 8 in 10 new job openings in the U.S. will require some workforce training or postsecondary education. Of the 30 fastest growing occupations in America, half require at least a four-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. Last year, the President signed the *Heath 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 2020-21, 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, and that 143,000 Latino student borrowers will avail themselves of new protections for student loan repayment, under the Income-Based Repayment program, which ensure affordability.
- **Simplification of the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)*.** Providing financial aid to students is a top priority. In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education took action to reduce the complexity of the FAFSA and the amount of time necessary to complete it. The form now allows applicants to retrieve tax records electronically from the Internal Revenue Service, making it easier to complete the document. During the last two academic years, the number of federal student aid applicants increased by 35 percent—up from 16.4 million students to 22.1 million students.
- **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. Community college is where many Latino students earn their first college degree and this investment will help students receive job training to increase their skills, or prepare to attend a four-year institution.
- **Strengthening Hispanic-Serving Institutions.** More than half of America’s Latino undergraduates attend a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) – that is, a public or private nonprofit college or university with a student body that is at least 25 percent Latino. 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.

ADVANCING EQUALITY IN EDUCATION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs)

The U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights reached a settlement agreement with the Boston School Committee that ensures English language learner students will no longer be denied language support services based on a system that did not accurately assess or provide for their language needs. As a result of the agreement, more than 4,000 students who were inappropriately characterized as having “opted out” of ELL services will now have ELL and compensatory services made available to them. In addition, approximately 4,300 students who were improperly identified as non-ELL students, will, for the first time, be offered ELL services.

SAVING AND CREATING JOBS

When President Obama took office, American schools were facing a potential catastrophe. Experts estimated that as many as 600,000 education jobs would be lost. The *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* provided nearly \$100 billion for education. States reported that these funds helped save or create more than 325,000 education jobs. In the summer of 2010, an additional \$10 billion saved up to 160,000 education jobs for the 2010-11 school year.

WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE ON EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR HISPANICS: PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

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, Juan Sepúlveda was appointed Executive Director to the Office of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

Between June 2009 and January 2010, the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics convened more than 10,000 people in 100 communities in 30 states, including Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. These community conversations served to reintroduce the office to the community, hear key challenges and priorities on the frontlines of the education system with respect to the Hispanic community, and enlist individuals and organizations to join the White House Initiative's National Network to partner with others nationwide to work on these issues.

On Oct. 19, 2010, President Obama signed Executive Order 13555 renewing the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. The office also convened more than 300 national leaders at its National Education Summit and Call to Action on Oct. 18

The mission of the office is to help restore the United States to its role as the global leader in education and to strengthen the nation by expanding education opportunities and improving education outcomes for Hispanics of all ages by helping to ensure that all Hispanics receive a complete and competitive education that prepares them for college, a career and productive and satisfying lives.

The top priority of the office is to identify and help organize public-private partnerships aimed at community education reform initiatives that increase Hispanic education attainment levels, thereby contributing to President Obama's 2020 goal.

FOR MORE EDUCATION-RELATED INFORMATION

- [White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics – Facebook Page](#)
- [White House Initiative for Excellence in Education for Hispanics – Web Page](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education](#)
- [Federal Student Aid](#)
- [Discretionary Grant Applications](#)
- [Race to the Top](#)