

A Stronger New York City:

INCREASING LATINO COLLEGE ACCESS, RETENTION AND GRADUATION



POLICY BLUEPRINT
Winter 2014

 **CREAR
FUTUROS**



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executive summary





As the youngest and fastest growing community in New York City, Latinos represent in many ways the hope and promise of *La Gran Manzana* (The Big Apple). However, the continuing failure of our educational system to prepare Latino youth for college success threatens the future prosperity of the Latino community and New York City as a whole. According to Lumina Foundation, just 23 percent of Latino New Yorkers between 25 and 64 years old had at least a two-year college degree, compared to 52 percent of whites.¹ This educational gap is startling and requires immediate action.

In response to this crisis, Hispanic Federation (HF) and the City University of New York (CUNY) have partnered with community-based and education non-profits, educators, public policy stakeholders and business leaders to launch the *Latino CREAR (College Readiness, Access and Retention) Coalition*. The Coalition is focused on promoting and advancing policies and practices that improve Latino educational equity and access, and lead to college success. CREAR represents an investment in the future of Latinos and New York City.

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¹ Lumina Foundation. (2013). *A Stronger Nation through Higher Education: Visualizing data to help us achieve a big goal for college attainment*. http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/A_stronger_nation_through_higher_education-2013.pdf

executive summary

Crisis can equal opportunity, especially with New York City undergoing a major leadership change, and new voices calling for a progressive reimagining of our schools and education. At the same time, the introduction of Common Core State Standards² brings a new urgency to the work of improving Latino academic performance. Increased standards mean that Latino students will be confronting a challenging and changed academic environment.

The following pages contain the *Latino CREAR Coalition's* top eight action priorities for improving Latino college access, retention and graduation. These recommendations are rooted in an understanding that achieving college readiness and success for Latinos will require a renewed collective effort, reliable funding and high-quality monitoring, and that many different adjustments, both large and small, must be made.

1 Establish a NYC College Readiness & Success Commission

Two-in-five Latino students do not finish high school and, of those who graduate, just 15 percent are deemed “college ready.” A NYC College Readiness & Success Commission must be charged to develop an action plan of legislative and budgetary reforms and investments that will increase rates of educational success for Latino and all students.

2 Strengthen Parent & Family Engagement

We expect parents to assist their children with homework and ensure their attendance, but do not recognize and support parents’ roles as primary educators. In order to close the Latino college readiness and success gap, we must revamp the way schools are reaching out and connecting with parents and families. To that end, it is vital that we expand parent-teacher nights to serve as community open houses, increase the role and training of parent coordinators, promote innovative home visit model programs, and enhance parent access to resources. Equally important, the NYC DOE must have the full support of the mayor and sufficient funding to close the breach between policy and practice.

²The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of K-12 standards in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The goal of CCSS is to provide a clear, consistent understanding of what students are expected to learn. The standards are supposed to reflect the knowledge and skills required for successful entry into college and careers. <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/CommonCoreLibrary/ForFamilies/UnderstandingCC/default>

3 Forge Relationships Between Latino-Serving Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Schools

CBOs provide critically needed services and programs, including academic tutoring, leadership development, social and economic opportunities, arts and culture, fitness training and more. Building Community Schools, Beacon Programs and After School Programs with CBO partners will provide students and their parents with an integrated set of services including academic, health, workforce, immigration, nutrition and family assistance. Hiring a Senior Operations and Community Manager in every school will be instrumental in helping schools forge relationships with CBOs and achieve much greater community and parental involvement.

4 Demand Excellence in English Language Learner (ELL) Programs

The lack of certified ELL teachers, appropriate educational assessments and high-quality programs continue to undermine the education of ELL students in NYC. To address this, we must expand bilingual teacher recruitment, improve the curricula of the schools of education that prepare teachers and create an ELL parent academy. We also need to significantly increase the range of high-quality ELL programs in NYC, including dual language, transitional bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL).

5 Make College Accessible Regardless of Immigration Status

Despite attending city schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, New York's undocumented students are left in limbo after graduating high school, ineligible to receive federal and state tuition assistance, scholarships, grants or loans. Championing the passage of the NYS Dream Act, pushing for progressive tax reforms and making targeted investments to increase the number of guidance counselors will go a long way towards making the dream of a higher education a greater possibility for our immigrant students.

6 Support Educators' Need for Professional Development

Teachers play a critical role in our children's education. In order to improve educational outcomes for Latinos and all students, teachers must have the tools they need to be their most effective. That includes smaller class sizes and continuous professional development opportunities. We must also invest in recruiting and developing highly qualified Latino bilingual teachers to ensure our teaching force reflects the diversity of New York City.

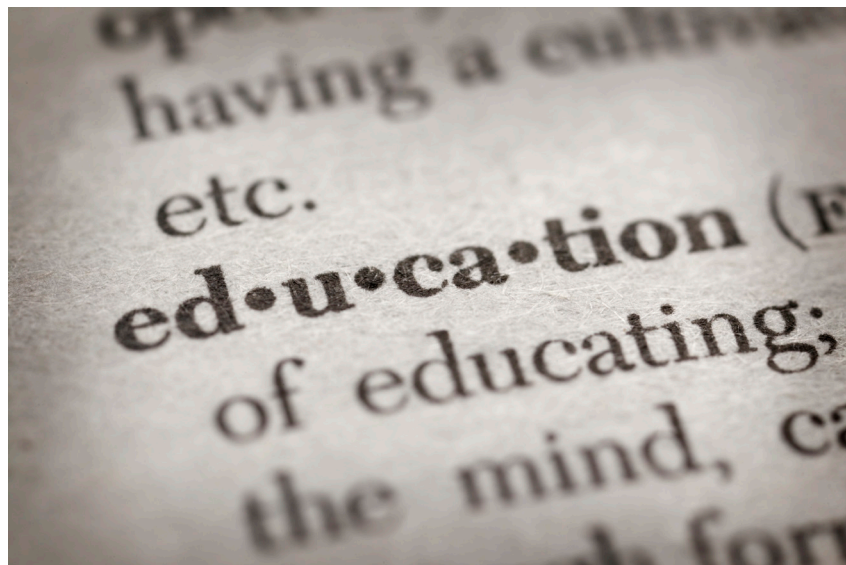
7 Support NYC Department of Education (DOE) and City University of New York (CUNY) Curricula Alignment

The twin urgencies of the remediation crisis and the implementation of the more demanding Common Core State Standards require high-level attention and support from the mayor's office. The *Latino CREAR Coalition* recommends that the mayor support efforts among DOE and CUNY staff to align curricula and to make culturally-relevant curricula available throughout NYC's education system.

8 Fund College Persistence and Completion Programs

College persistence and completion programs such as CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) and HF/CUNY's innovative *CREAR Futuros* initiative help provide much-needed support systems for our academically at-risk students, including peer mentoring, comprehensive advisement, tutoring, financial aid, and social services.

It is our hope that this document will inform the priorities and decisions of the city's political and educational leadership in the months and years ahead. Closing the Latino college gap is within our reach if we have a common vision, a common path, and a long-term focused commitment. We know that the investments we make to improve Latino college access, retention and graduation will positively touch every aspect of our community and help build **a stronger New York City**.





Establish a NYC College Readiness and Success Commission

1

Education and student success – especially at the highest levels – must be at the center of our plan to ensure New York does not remain a Tale of Two Cities – one that is educated and prosperous, and the other that is struggling under the weight of poor educational attainment and the inevitable inequality of opportunity. With forty percent of NYC’s student population being Latino, the city’s ability to address the rise of income inequality and grow a strong middle class, rests a great deal on its capacity to significantly improve educational outcomes for Latino students.³

Currently, far too many Latino youth are falling through the cracks and failing to graduate high school, let alone college. In fact, two-in-five Latino students do not finish

15% NYC Latino students graduate from HS college-ready

high school and, of those who graduate, just 15 percent are deemed “college ready.” According to the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE), a student is “college ready” if they score at least 75% on the English Language Arts Regents Test and 80% on the Math Regents Test.⁴

The lack of college preparedness forces a disproportionate number of Latino graduates to spend up to a year taking remedial, non-credit bearing courses. These students and their families end up using their financial aid or incurring debt, making college completion difficult at best. Moreover, the pushing back of the “graduation goal post,” creates psychological barriers that hinder retention and graduation.

In order to ensure more Latino students are ready for and complete college, our city must rethink how we prepare our young women and men for higher education. This means “getting under the hood” and not only strengthening college supports, but also aligning K-12 curricula and providing students, parents and educators with resources and programs to meet the challenge of achieving college readiness.

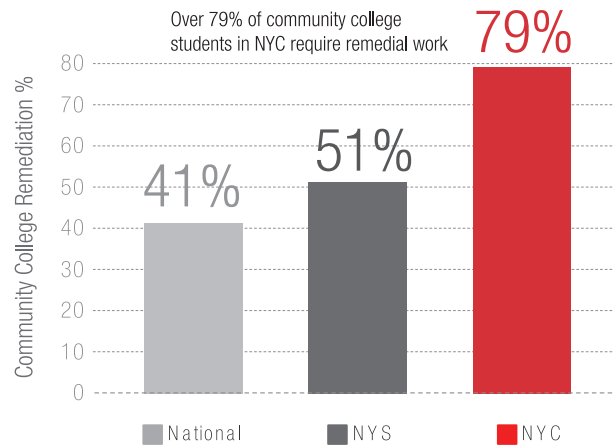
Education and student success – especially at the highest levels – must be at the center of our plan to ensure New York does not remain a Tale of Two Cities – one that is educated and prosperous, and the other that is struggling under the weight of poor educational attainment and the inevitable inequality of opportunity.

³New York City Independent Budget Office. (May 2013). *New York City Public School Indicators: Demographics, Resources, Outcomes*.

⁴NYC Department of Education. (May 2012). *Final Changes to High School Progress Reports for 2011-12*. http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B4D1BD81-1E62-4FAA-B22A-061AF1372235/0/201112FinalChangesHS2012_05_07.pdf

While select education reform efforts under way are making some difference, much more energy and attention must be devoted to improve college readiness rates across the city. Therefore, we call on Mayor Bill de Blasio to establish a NYC College Readiness & Success Commission charged with developing an action plan of legislative and budgetary reforms and investments that will increase rates of educational success for Latino and all students.

College Remediation Rates



Source: CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2011.

Members of the NYC College Readiness & Success Commission should be stakeholders of the highest caliber. It is particularly important that we ensure that those serving on the Commission have a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Latino students, a standard that should be applied to other groups and cultures as well. This means having members with direct knowledge and a track record working on policies, programs and initiatives that advance Latino educational success.



1

The Commission should be transparent, independent, participatory, and a true champion and advocate for students, educators and parents. The Commission should also be non-partisan and consist of key stakeholders from across the education, nonprofit and private sectors including, but not limited to, the following:

- Educators from all points along the education pathway
- Students
- Parents
- Principals
- Community Advocates
- Youth Development Professionals
- Researchers
- NYC Department of Education
- NYS Education Department
- CUNY and Other Higher Education Institutions
- Labor Leaders
- Policymakers
- Business Leaders
- Foundations

Members of the Commission should be appointed by the mayor with input from educators, key community leaders and the New York City Council. The mayor should ensure the Commission will have the purview to consult with government agencies, and elected and appointed public officials that are relevant to its mission. The Commission should also have access to key aggregate data on student and school inputs, performance and other information that can inform its findings and recommendations.

A NYC College Readiness & Success Commission is essential if we are to significantly improve college readiness and success outcomes. The following focus areas should be at the center of the Commission's work:

A. High-Quality Delivery of Services

All schools need high quality teachers, curricula, and programming that prepare students for college and fruitful careers. With the goal of improving the delivery of high-quality services in every school, the proposed Commission can examine the structure of the city's education system including teacher recruitment and training, curriculum development, and program implementation. The said Commission would be charged with outlining ways to improve these key educational markers needed for increasing student performance.

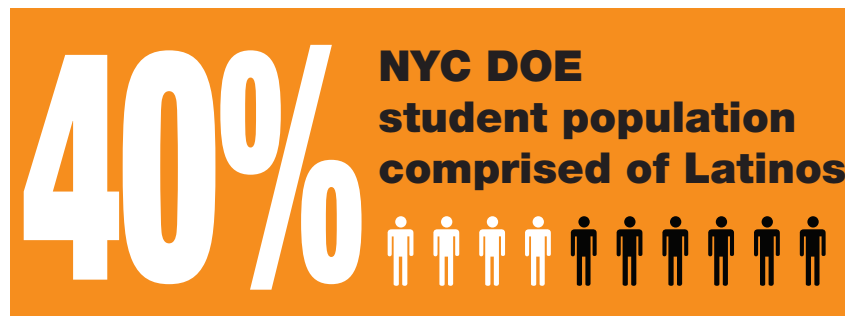
B. Better Communication Among New York City’s Educational Stakeholders

Many Latino families struggle with navigating educational systems in an increasingly complex environment. The more consistent and coherent the information and policies from DOE leadership, the more we can ensure that our students are better supported by parents and other stakeholders in their education. The proposed Commission would help develop clear methods and guidelines for improved communication and strategies, and offer research on what produces student success.

Putting high expectations into practice for all children requires that we communicate clearly in order to significantly broaden awareness of what happens and is expected at each point along the education pipeline. The new Common Core State Standards raise the stakes and challenges for Latino parents, educators, families and allies to come together to ensure the public’s voice is heard on educational reforms, curriculum focus and implementation, and student performance measurements.

C. Increased Checks and Balances on the Policies and Practices of the Department of Education

The previous city administration made education reform a top priority. Unfortunately, many of these reforms were plagued by few checks on the power of the mayor, little transparency, and a lack of authentic community input and participation. The proposed Commission could play an important role in helping the NYC Department of Education better serve students, educators and families by meeting regularly with the mayor and key decision-makers for both informational and advisory sessions. Such convenings would provide important opportunities for dialogue, build understanding, and generate improved buy-in among education and community stakeholders. The pending reauthorization of the state law granting control of the city school system to the NYC Mayor provides an important opportunity to address flaws in public ownership and DOE transparency.



Illinois's Latino Family Commission

Illinois's Latino Family Commission can provide an initial model for consideration. This effort, led by Layla P. Suleiman Gonzalez, advises and works directly with agencies, in order to improve and expand existing policies, services, programs, and opportunities for Latino families. The commission serves both monitoring and commenting functions. It assists agencies in developing programs, services, public policies and research strategies, facilitates the participation and representation of Latinos, and promotes research efforts to document the impact of policies and programs on Latino families.

- <http://appointments.illinois.gov/appointmentsDetail.cfm?id=166>
- <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=2949&ChapterID=5> **

D. Expanding Innovative College Readiness Models

The NYC College Readiness & Success Commission should be charged with identifying and determining how to expand innovative college readiness models. The NYC DOE currently operates several early college programs in high schools to inspire more youth to attend college and ease the time and cost of the college experience. One superb example, CUNY's College Now Program, offers dual secondary school and college enrollment and college-readiness programs for over 20,000 students annually in over 450 public high schools. Studies have indicated that students participating in College Now have higher retention and graduation rates, rates of progress, and grade point averages than their non-College Now counterparts.

Another innovative program, the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI), has used research, enhanced school funding and technical assistance to tackle the educational achievement gap of Black and Latino young men. Launched in 2012, ESI has been working with 40 public high schools to foster innovative college-going cultures that significantly improve college and career readiness rates. In a recent report, "Succeeding in the City," researchers at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education provide key findings on how Black and Latino male students at these 40 schools are successfully navigating the demands of high school and the transition to college.⁵ While ESI is a relatively new project and needs further assessment, it has shown early promise in preparing Black and Latino youth for college success.

College Now and ESI represent the types of college readiness models that the proposed Commission should assess and recommend how we may be able to replicate and apply more broadly throughout the city.

⁵Harper, S.R., & Associates. (2014). *Succeeding in the city. A report from the New York City Black and Latino Male High School Achievement Study*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Student of Race and Equity in Education.



Strengthen Parent and Family Engagement

2



Parents are a child’s first teacher and play key roles in educational achievement. Yet, this fact is often disregarded when children enter school. We expect parents to assist their children with homework and ensure their attendance, but such expectations are often not balanced by structures or practices that truly recognize parents and families as primary educators and that support parents who may be unfamiliar with the education system. When it comes to Latino families, these dynamics can be further complicated by language, work demands, and family responsibilities.⁶

The systemic disinvestment around community and parental involvement continues to limit and undermine educational reforms in New York City. The recent community backlash against the Common Core State Standards illustrates why parental involvement and buy-in with educational policies and practices is so important. If we truly want to close the gap around Latino college readiness and success, the NYC Department of Education’s Division of Family & Community Engagement must have the full support of the mayor, high-quality staff, and sufficient funding to focus on closing the breach between policy and practice. The Division must also have a culture that is authentically inclusive of parents and families, and recognizes them as assets.

⁶CREAR *Futuros* uses the definition of parent and family engagement put forth by the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families. “Parental involvement” can be defined as the following: Parental involvement in the home (i.e. talking about educational subjects, helping with homework, reading to the child, managing the child’s time); Parental involvement at schools (i.e. attending a Parent-Teacher conference, volunteering at school activities, attending school activities). (See Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, August 2009 Brief, “Parental Involvement in NYC Schools: Using Latino Families Cultural Strengths to Enhance Academic Achievement.”)

Parent engagement is part of our collective responsibility. As stakeholders in our city’s educational system, we must ensure that educators are trained to facilitate parent-friendly settings and systems, and that there are policies in place to support such engagement.

The overwhelming majority of Latino parents want and expect their children to do well in school and to attend college, but far too few understand the steps and tasks needed to prepare for college (e.g. achieving grade-level reading and math proficiency, signing up for the SAT, taking AP classes, saving for college). Many Latino parents, especially those who are not fluent in English, urgently need someone to sit down and explain what can be done at home and in school to improve their children’s educational outcomes. As one CBO leader said, “Much of the knowledge that our parents and families have is superficial at best. We need to help them connect the dots so they can fully contribute to their children’s education.”⁷

Parent engagement is part of our collective responsibility. As stakeholders in our city’s educational system, we must ensure that educators are trained to facilitate parent-friendly settings and systems, and that there are policies in place to support such engagement.

If we are to be successful in strengthening and expanding parent and family engagement, we must be willing to change the norm and reimagine current school outreach practices. For instance, opportunities for parental school visits must take into account the ability of working parents and families to attend. Similarly, academically enriching offerings such as SAT prep must be made available late in the evenings and the weekends to include students who shoulder the responsibility of caring for family members, younger siblings, and infirmed relatives.

Increase direct connections between parents/families and college completion supports



Looking at parent and family engagement through the Latino lens, it is crucial that translated documents and signs, as well as interpreters are available.⁸ While the DOE has come a long way in recent years through the establishment of a Chancellor’s Regulation outlining parent language access rights and the creation of a strong central translation and interpretation unit, too many parents are still unaware of these rights and services.

⁷ Mark Gonzalez, Executive Director, ASPIRA of NY

⁸ Woodward, Jennifer. (2009). “Bilingual Education Provision in NY State: Assessment of Local Compliance.” Albany, NY: New York Latino Research and Resources Network. See http://www.nylarnet.org/reports/edu_BilingualEducation.pdf Accessed 25 July 2013.

2

The combination of school-based and online parent portals and initiatives can effectively address the overlapping challenges⁹ faced by many Latino families. To that end, we recommend the following:

A. Redefining Parent-Teacher Conferences

Since many Latino parents are navigating the complex education system without having graduated from high school or college themselves, it is vital to support efforts that increase parent awareness about what specific steps must be taken—from the earliest years of childhood—for a student to be prepared for, gain admission, afford and graduate from college. Parent-Teacher Nights, which take place at least 3 times per school-year, present the perfect opportunity for providing parents with regular and specific information about what they should be doing to support their child’s education and prepare them for college. They can also serve to raise parent awareness about the range of existing resources that are already available through DOE, CUNY and other sources.

Parent-Teacher nights should function as real community open-houses where the DOE, the principal, and educators have the opportunity to showcase the strengths and resources of the school itself, as well as resources available in the community. Partnering with CBOs to have a presence and information tables at these events has been shown to go a long way, not only in connecting students and families to real supports and opportunities, but also in creating a welcoming school environment and a positive sense of community.

B. Expanding Training & Roles for Parent Coordinators

Parent coordinators in each school have great capacity to strengthen and integrate college-readiness supports into the school-family relationship. Training parent coordinators to support guidance counselors, of whom there is a significant shortage,¹⁰ could significantly increase the number of parents and students who receive college-readiness information and support.

⁹These overlapping challenges can include navigating the often complex education system, being and feeling welcome in school and other official settings, and finding one’s way through complex systems of work, economy, and government.

¹⁰According to a 2012 report from the Office of the New York City Comptroller, the ratio of students to guidance counselors is 259:1. See New York City Comptroller’s Office. October 2012. The Power of Guidance: Giving High School Students the College Counseling They Need. http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Power_of_Guidance_Oct_PDF.pdf, p. 6. Accessed 25 July 2013.

While the *CREAR Futuros Coalition* would like to see the parent coordinator roles expanded, there is currently too much variance in the quality and effectiveness of parent coordinators from school to school. Partnerships between the DOE, CUNY, CBOs, and others forged for the purpose of enhancing training opportunities and requirements for parent coordinators can make a real difference in the months and years ahead.

One example of a successful model for parent coordinators is Hispanic Federation’s Pathways to Academic Excellence Initiative, which offers a culturally-competent educational seminar series that enables parents to actively support their children’s education. The College Board also offers online webinars on financial aid information for high school seniors and families.

These resources should form part of the professional development given to parent coordinators so they can conduct college readiness workshops and trainings for parents and families on their own.

A greater effort should also be made to encourage more parents to participate in the formal decision-making structures already in place, such as the Department of Education’s Community Education Councils. Parent coordinators can and should conduct leadership trainings aimed at increasing participation rates in school leadership teams and community education councils, and guide parents in organizing for school-based and system-wide improvements.



C. Revitalizing the Youth Line

The city can make an invaluable contribution to individual students, families, and the city itself by championing and allotting appropriate funding for a reinvigorated Youth Line that would be a gold standard of student and parent portals – a 311 hotline and website for education. These portals should always be school-based and online¹¹ for maximum access to information to facilitate consistent connections so that parents can play as supportive a role as possible through all points and phases of their children’s education.

¹¹ When it comes to online parent portals and Latino families, be aware of and account for varying access to and familiarity with digital and online resources. The digital divide still exists and can hamper access to information.

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D. Expanding Parent Access to Opportunity Resources

Schools can play an important role in connecting parents and families to employment, housing, government and health systems. By doing so, schools will forge greater connections with parents and families and help champion the well-being of their students and their community overall. Some Beacon programs have parent opportunity centers already in place that could provide important lessons for the expansion of such programs. The city should expand parent access to opportunity centers across all five boroughs to increase the availability of multilingual support services and computer access for academic and college application needs.

E. College Freshman Seminar for Parents & Students

Starting at a new school can be a nervous, uncertain time for incoming students – and their parents. Mistakes regarding course selection, financial aid and other needs can get a student’s academic career off to a bad start and inhibit college success. Establishing a mandatory freshman seminar for students and a parent can ensure everyone starts on the same foot and will help students and families avoid these typical pitfalls.





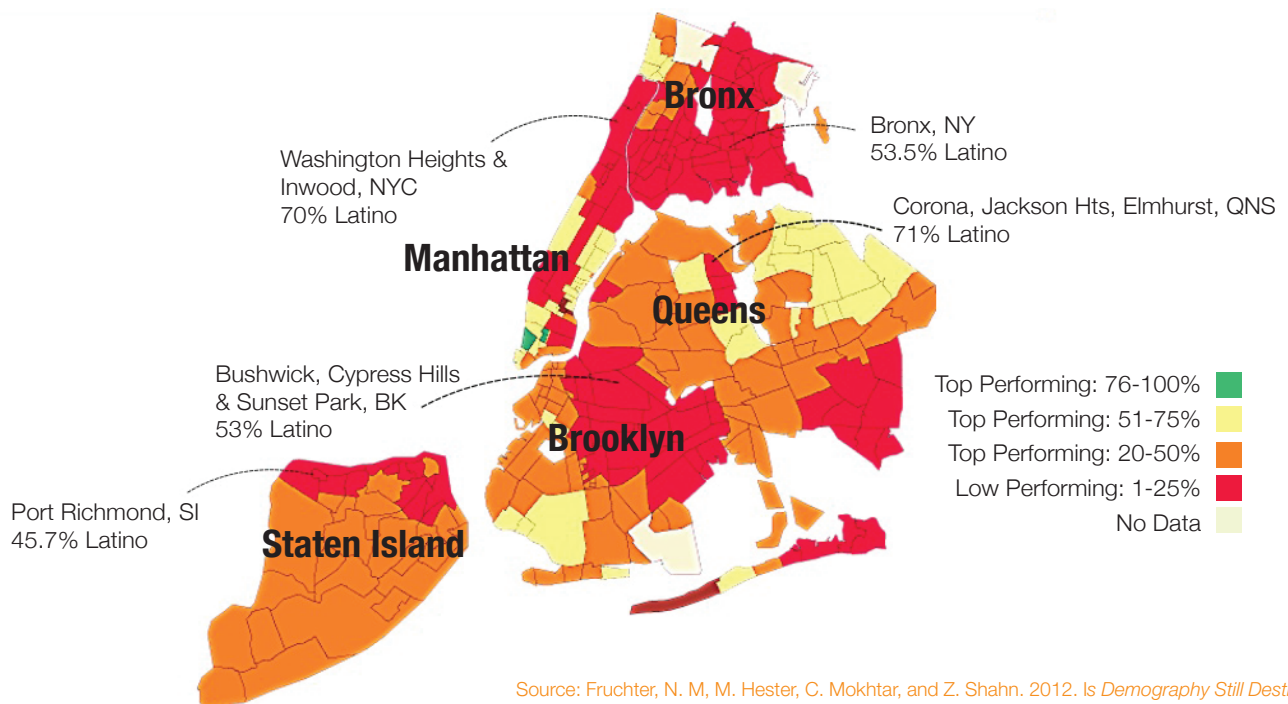
Forge Relationships Between Latino-Serving Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Schools

3

As organizations that exist to serve and represent the interests of their communities, CBOs can and must play a major role in helping schools live up to their responsibility of providing an excellent education for all students. CBOs provide a wealth of critically-needed services and programs for our students and parents including academic tutoring, leadership development, cultural exploration, social and economic opportunities, civic education, and physical education. These services go beyond what traditional schools can provide and work to ensure our next generation of young women and men are well rounded and ready for a challenging world.

However, many nonprofit CBOs are struggling to stay open and meet the growing needs of our youth and families. Declining government resources and low philanthropic support have left a vital part of our human services and education system vulnerable and unable to fully carry out all it can do to improve educational outcomes. Moreover, the city has not done enough to foster and fund partnerships between public schools and nonprofit CBOs. If the city wants to leverage its resources and expertise to ensure more students graduate high school and college, it must champion and invest in such partnerships across the five boroughs.

New York City College Readiness Rates



Source: Fruchter, N. M., M. Hester, C. Mokhtar, and Z. Shahn. 2012. *Is Demography Still Destiny? Neighborhood Demographics and Public High School Students' Readiness for College in New York City*. Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University.

A. Build 100 Community Schools

There is no better way to champion lasting partnerships between schools and CBOs than through the creation of community schools. Through a shared location and partnership, community schools provide an integrated set of services including academic, health, social, youth, family, and community development and engagement. Open to the community all day, every day, they not only raise student outcomes by overcoming social obstacles, but they help build stronger families and healthier communities. We enthusiastically support Mayor de Blasio's commitment to create 100 community schools over the next four years and offer our expertise and direct partnership in shaping schools equipped to serve the Latino and English Language Learner (ELL) community. Along these lines, we support the expansion of innovative immigrant and ELL-serving school models like International High Schools, newcomer academies, and night-and-day academies.

B. Access to School Facilities

The *Latino CREAR Coalition* urges the new administration to adopt and support a policy that would require all schools to partner with high quality youth-serving CBOs to keep schools open between 3:00pm – 6:00pm, when space in schools is available. By gaining access to school facilities, CBOs can work with school administrators to provide students with academic, cultural, athletic and other enrichment opportunities.

C. Increase Funding for Afterschool Programs

CBOs and the Department of Youth and Community Development's Beacon, Out-of-School Time and Cornerstone Programs also have proven track records of helping schools to more fully live up to the policy ideal of schools as "centerpieces of community activity."¹² However, these afterschool programs are consistently faced with funding shortfalls and a destabilizing budget process that adds unnecessary planning uncertainty and hampers their capacity to provide the support that their leaders and constituencies know is critical to student success. For many young people, these programs make the crucial difference in educational and life outcomes.

We are supportive of Mayor de Blasio's plan to leverage a progressive tax increase to expand afterschool programs for middle school students. We urge the mayor to broaden these resources to students at the high school level who are often overlooked. Devising more equitable needs funding formulas and models is necessary to ensure that target communities are receiving adequate investments towards improving Latino student success.

¹² Referenced on the NYC DOE's "Schools in the Community" page <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/default.htm>. Accessed 25 July 2013.

3

D. Senior Operations and Community Manager in Every NYC School

For far too long, parents and communities have experienced a disconnect from the schools that serve their children. If we are to bring forth large-scale change, and systemically address this problem, we need to ensure that every school in NYC has a Senior Operations and Community Manager accountable for parental and community engagement. This high-level administrator would support the principal in managing community relations with CBOs and local partners, ensuring alignment and coherence of programs serving students and families, and managing school operations (budget, hiring, facilities) to ensure schools are responsive to community needs. This individual would also be responsible for supervising the school's parent coordinator and assisting guidance counselors in transition planning (particularly from elementary to middle school).

As an expansion of their role, parent coordinators would help Senior Operations and Community Managers coordinate relationships between CBOs, schools, students and families. Together, they would help develop an inventory and knowledge of available community services at schools and serve as liaisons between schools and CBOs, match students with available services, and teachers with extracurricular activities to support classroom work.

E. Access to School Data and Curricula

The *Latino CREAR Coalition* also recommends that the NYC DOE provide easy points of access to Department of Education data. Latino youth-serving organizations are eager to provide extra supports to students where needed, but often have no way of accessing information about student progress. Access to aggregate school data and curricula would also allow youth-serving CBOs to complement the curricula in ways likely to boost student success, whether through complementing DOE curricula with engaging activities that bring subject matters to life or through providing appropriate tutoring.

Youth Development CBOs Provide

- Tutoring
- Arts
- Culture
- Athletics
- Civic Engagement
- Psychosocial Support
- Safe Places
- High School and College Prep
- Supportive Relationships
- Social and Economic Opportunities

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Demand Excellence in English Language Learner (ELL) Programs

4



The state of education for our city's English Language Learners (ELL) is in crisis. According to the New York State Education Department, only 35% of NYC's ELL's are found to have graduated on time in 2012, compared to a 60% on time graduation rate for all other students. Worse yet, only 8% of ELLs who graduated high schools over the past year were deemed to be college ready.¹³

Latinos constitute nearly two-thirds of the city's ELL population, and if we are to significantly improve Latino college access rates overall, we must make improving ELL education an immediate citywide imperative. Far too many ELLs in NYC are not being provided with the linguistic and educational support they need to succeed academically. To correct this, we must expand bilingual teacher recruitment, improve the curricula of the schools of education that prepare teachers, create an ELL parent academy and significantly increase the range of high-quality ELL programs in New York City. We must also commit to an asset-based philosophy of education that embraces linguistic diversity and builds on ELL and immigrant children and families' languages and cultures.

¹³ NYSED Office of Information and Reporting Services, October 2013.

The *Latino CREAR Coalition* sees the following actions as critical to improving Latino ELL educational outcomes.

A. ELL Parent Choice

If NYC schools are to improve ELL graduation rates, then the range of ELL programs – transitional bilingual, dual-language, and English as a Second Language – must be available to all students who need such academic support, including charter and small schools. As important, parents must be informed – in their native language – of ELL options and their rights to the availability of ELL programs, so they may make the best choice for their child.

Unfortunately, the former administration dismantled many vital transitional bilingual education programs, especially at the high school level. Mayor Bill de Blasio and NYC Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña must set out to remedy this shift and provide legally-mandated ELL choice at more schools. We urge the restoration and expansion of Spanish transitional bilingual and dual language programs across the five boroughs.

B. Assessments for ELLs

ELL progress cannot be measured without a range of appropriate assessment tools. Researchers and advocates have shown that the emphasis on factual memorization in current assessments does not recognize that ELLs have learning styles that are different from their English Language Proficient (ELP) peers and subsequently does not accurately measure progress or indicate students' needs to educators or families.¹⁴ With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, it is all the more important that we emphasize the need for schools to use assessments capable of accurately reflecting the full range of ELL students' abilities.

Latinos constitute nearly two-thirds of the city's ELL population, and if we are to significantly improve Latino college access rates overall, we must make improving ELL education an immediate citywide imperative.

¹⁴ Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, 2013.

4

C. ELL Supplemental Academic Support

A growing proportion of the city's ELL student community faces additional hurdles as they are older than other students at their grade level, leaving them less time to finish by the age of 21. Older, under-credited students need twice the help in half the time, all while learning two languages. Similarly, Students with an Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE), or those who have either not received necessary early education literacy or who have large gaps in their schooling require additional services to catch up and graduate. The city must do more to provide extended instruction and summer academies for these at-risk ELLs and SIFEs. Additionally, the city must strengthen ELL teacher quality by providing all teachers an opportunity to learn methodologies to support ELLs in all academic and elective courses, and by expanding bilingual teacher recruitment initiatives to bolster the ELL teaching corps.

D. ELL Parent Academy

The parents of ELL students often get lost in the system. Echoing the recommendations of the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, the *Latino CREAR Coalition* urges the mayor to establish an ELL Parent Academy which can prepare and assist parents and families to support their children's education. Workshops and other sessions at such a Parent Academy should be easily accessible, inviting and participatory. It should give parents a clear sense of what their children experience in the classroom, emphasize reading, and provide examples of lessons in native languages so that parents can more effectively work with their children at home. Again, the implementation of the Common Core State Standards increases the need and urgency for more effectively enlisting parents in pursuit of educational and career success.

The Latino CREAR Coalition urges the mayor to establish an ELL Parent Academy to prepare and assist parents and families in supporting their children's education.



Make College Accessible Regardless of Immigration Status

5

Even as New York City stands as a beacon of both immigrant accomplishments and rights, significant obstacles remain for our immigrant youth in many opportunity areas, especially the path to college access and completion. As was highlighted in the previous section, our city is failing to adequately educate our large foreign-born student population. A subset of that underserved populace is our undocumented student body, which faces its own set of unique challenges. Despite attending city schools, in some cases as early as kindergarten, undocumented students are left in limbo after graduating high school, ineligible to receive federal and state tuition assistance, scholarships, grants or loans.

A decade ago, New York showed leadership by making it possible for all students who graduate from a high school in New York to pay in-state tuition rates at CUNY and SUNY. We need that same kind of leadership today from Governor Andrew Cuomo, the New York State Legislature and public officials in the city who can use their influence and resources to make college more affordable for our undocumented student population. Towards that end, the Latino CREAR Coalition supports the following actions:

A. NYS DREAM Act

The cost of a college education remains a significant financial concern for many New York students and their families. According to the Office of the New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, the state's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) aids nearly 30% of New York's college students, providing \$920 million in financial assistance in 2012. Without this funding, many of these students would simply not be able to attend and finish college. Sadly, this essential aid is not available to undocumented college students - arguably the most financially in need group in the state.

The passage of the New York State DREAM Act, introduced by NYS Assemblyman Francisco Moya and Senator José Peralta, would help remedy this wrong. Principally, it would allow undocumented students who meet in-state tuition requirements to access TAP aid, scholarships and enroll in 529 tuition savings accounts. The estimated costs of extending financial aid to undocumented students would be less than twenty million dollars, or an increase of less than two percent of current TAP expenditures. This investment would open up higher education to thousands of eager and bright immigrant students, and yield significant social and economic benefits to our state. For this reason, the passage of the New York State DREAM Act is a top priority for the *Latino CREAR Coalition*.



B. Tax Reform

Investments in education are investments in the future of New York City that pay for themselves many times over in terms of economic productivity and community development. We encourage the city to use every opportunity to advocate for progressive tax reforms that will fund universal pre-kindergarten, dual language programs, afterschool initiatives and other efforts that will improve educational outcomes for all students, and in particular, our immigrant youth.

C. Financial Sector

We also suggest tapping into the expertise of financial professionals in New York City to develop a subcommittee to the suggested Commission that would focus on finding and/or developing innovative solutions to burdensome education costs. There is no shortage of intelligence or energy in New York's finance sector. The challenge is to align it productively with education goals in ways that will smooth the path to education and career success, opening up opportunities for all New Yorkers to prosper and contribute.

D. Public Education and Guidance Counselors

The new city administration can support awareness building around college readiness and access for immigrant students and their families through a public education media campaign and community outreach. A foundational part of this task must involve an investment in increasing the number and quality of guidance counselors in New York City public high schools, of which there is a well-known shortage. Increased counselor availability will ensure students do not miss financial aid opportunities and choose high school coursework and tests that will yield early college credit.



Support Educators' Need for Professional Development

6

Research shows that great teachers – inspiring, committed to their class youth and with a strong subject-matter mastery – are the school-based driving force behind great students. However, teaching students with varying levels of academic preparation, social needs and learning styles is a daunting task. As such, it is paramount that we prepare and provide ongoing support and training to new and experienced teachers. To improve teacher development and Latino educational outcomes, our city must invest in the following:

A. Smaller Class Sizes

Study after study demonstrates the benefits students receive when they attend smaller classes. The reasons are many and clear. Smaller classes allow teachers to offer more individualized attention and instruction to students, provide special assistance to students at risk, help forge a closer relationship with both students and parents, and spend less time on classroom management. Research also indicates that minority, immigrant, and low-income students, especially those in urban areas, benefit most from small classes.¹⁵ For these reasons, we call on the state and city government to recommit to class size reduction, especially in high poverty/low performing schools. An important starting point for this effort should be the establishment of specific benchmarks and budgetary allocations around class size reductions over the coming year.

B. Latino and Bilingual Teacher Recruitment

Latino educators are dramatically underrepresented in New York City public schools. This is deeply problematic not only because of issues of workplace diversity and equity, but because education research has consistently shown that Latino students who have had teachers of color as positive role models achieve greater educational progress.¹⁶

Our state and city governments can and must do more to ensure our teaching force better reflects the multilingual and multicultural diversity of New York City's student body. Towards that end, the NYC Department of Education and the new mayoral administration must dedicate itself to a policy of actively recruiting and hiring Latino and other teachers of diverse backgrounds. In tandem with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), they can work to advance the development and expansion of future teacher programs in NYC public schools, and develop a public awareness campaign promoting the benefits of a teaching career. At the same time, our city's education stakeholders must develop and expand scholarships and other incentives to encourage and support college students to enter the teaching profession. The proposed NYC College Readiness and Success Commission should investigate barriers preventing Latinos from entering and succeeding in the NYC teaching force, and make recommendations on how we can better recruit and retain quality Latinos to teach the city's 1.1 million students.

¹⁵ The Center for Latino Educational Excellence. (2003). *Closing the Achievement Gap*. The Thomas Rivera Policy Institute. University of Southern California.

¹⁶ Center for American Progress. (2011). *Increasing Teacher Diversity: Strategies to Improve the Teacher Workforce*.

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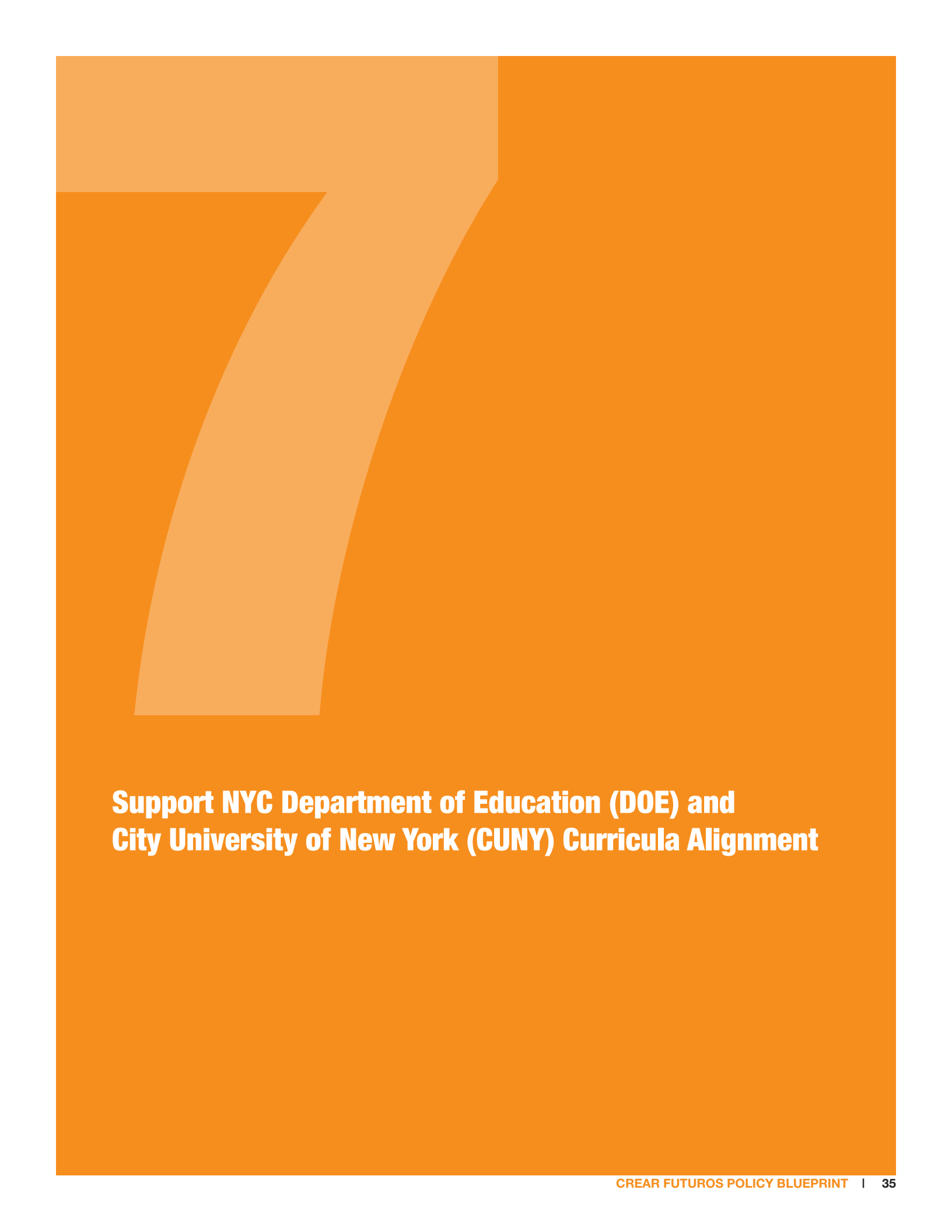
C. Teacher Education

If NYC's teachers are to be successful in educating students for a knowledge economy, we must make meaningful strides in helping them to understand the historical, cultural and community contexts that characterize their students. There are many opportunities to build such understanding for educators, beginning with the earliest stages of teacher training. Curricula at CUNY and other schools of education are one important venue for transmitting this type of knowledge, as are professional development offerings from the DOE, and connections and collaborations with CBOs. Teacher professional development must be ongoing and emphasize best practices, new learning technologies and curriculum resources, and connections to students and their culture. The proposed NYC College Readiness & Success Commission should explore new ways to expand and improve teacher preparation and professional development offerings.

D. Master Teacher Program

We support initiatives like the Master Teacher Program that couple experienced teachers with newer ones at struggling schools to ensure the latter perform well and remain in the system for years to come. Such programs ensure we hold onto our veteran teachers with fresh opportunities to mentor others, while simultaneously building the next generation of excellent teachers. Meanwhile, students in underperforming schools get exposure to teachers with whom they would not normally interact.





Support NYC Department of Education (DOE) and City University of New York (CUNY) Curricula Alignment

7

National and local data indicating low rates of college readiness and completion point to the need for improved alignment between high school and college curricula. While the Common Core State Standards aim to better align high school expectations and learning with those of colleges, further efforts should be made to ensure greater community input and educator training around its implementation. For instance, college faculty is largely unaware of the details of Common Core or implications for future impact on their students and coursework.

We need to provide ongoing opportunities and space for high school teachers and CUNY faculty members to meet to build an understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices at the high school and college levels. Additionally, these forums can provide space for educators to collaboratively review student work evaluations. Based on an analysis of feedback from smaller projects that have aimed to achieve these goals, participants indicated a desire to create ongoing opportunities for dialogue across high schools and colleges, opportunities to build collaborative structures that lead to systemic change, and an ability to collaboratively examine student work.

Curriculum alignment is recognized to be an intellectually challenging, complicated, and time-consuming endeavor. It can be difficult to recruit educators who are available to devote the necessary amount of time, and such alignment is also difficult to bring to scale. Mayor de Blasio can help bridge the unhelpful gap between secondary and post-secondary education by allocating funding for educators to spend the necessary time and effort that it takes to align curricula in ways that streamline students' learning experiences, but do not compromise on quality or education.¹⁶



¹⁶Graduate NYC! February 2013. *Curriculum Alignment Project Final Report: Lessons from an NYC DOE High School & CUNY College Faculty Collaborative*, pp. 15-16. <http://gradnyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/CA-Report-FINAL.pdf>



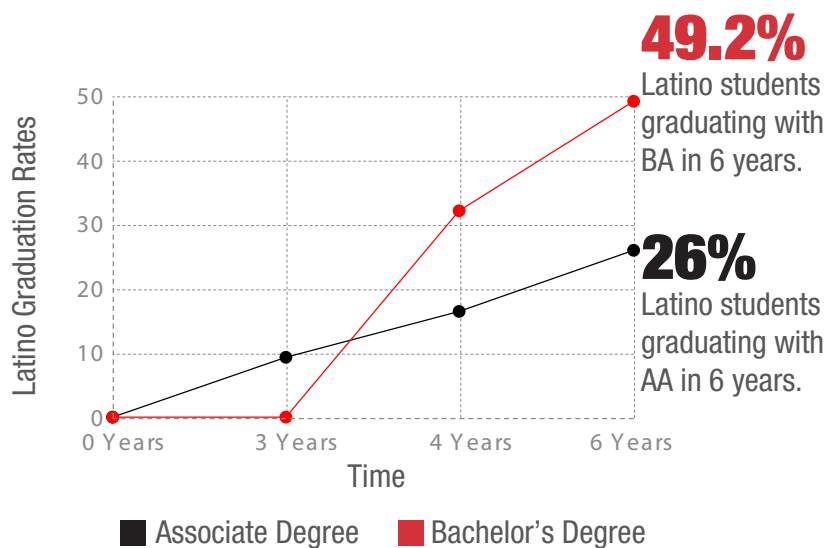
Fund College Persistence and Completion Programs

8

Higher education support programs – such as, advisement, financial support, tutoring, social services, and career planning – make a significant difference in whether students stay and graduate from college. This is especially the case for Latino and other low-income students who enter college with significant gaps in their education, work demands and other socioeconomic concerns. The first-generation status of many Latino students means that they are unfamiliar with the often-demanding routines of college and unable to turn to someone at home for guidance and counsel.

To account for these challenges, it is critical for institutions of higher learning to partner with CBOs and find the resources to increase support programs and services for academically at-risk students. As the largest public urban university in the nation, and the college destination and home of the vast majority of Latino students in the city, The City University of New York (CUNY) bears special mention and attention in this area. The *Latino CREAR Coalition* believes that the continued reform of remedial policy and programs at CUNY must be singularly focused on supporting students towards greater and timelier college completion. The following programs and initiatives are models that can and should be replicated to better serve Latino students post-high school and throughout the CUNY system.

Latino Graduation Rates in New York



Source: NYSED: Office of Research and Information Systems, NYSED-2.9, 2013.

A. 13th Grade Initiative

We recommend that the administration support a pilot 13th Grade Initiative, envisioned by the CBO El Puente in partnership with its nationally recognized public high school in Brooklyn, the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice. The 13th Grade is an innovative program specifically designed to provide Latino and other students with an additional year of academic advancement and leadership development that is comprehensive and culturally relevant, such that they will be better prepared to successfully transition to college without remediation. The program will integrate effective and well-researched practices of both El Puente and the Academy, to include: individual mentoring, culturally relevant, project-based curricula, leadership/empowerment training, internships, and Participatory Action Research (PAR). The program will also offer the students and their families an array of social services that are vital to their holistic development and preparation for a rigorous college experience.

B. CUNY Start

CUNY Start began in 2009 and provides an intensive pre-matriculation academic program for students admitted to CUNY with significant remedial needs in reading, writing, and math based on their scores on the CUNY Assessment Tests. CUNY Start seeks both to minimize the amount of required remedial coursework students must take and to foster higher levels of persistence and graduation once students matriculate into an associate degree program. Students temporarily delay their degree studies to participate in a 15 to 18-week program and pay only a \$75 fee to participate, thereby preserving financial aid for credit-bearing coursework. Close to half of all of the students who enter CUNY Start complete the semester having no further remedial needs, enabling them to begin college-level work in the following semester. Although the goal for Fall 2014 is to service almost 4,000 new students, every effort should be made to significantly expand this program.

8

C. CREAR Futuros Peer Mentorship Program

Research shows that peer mentoring helps to increase student retention and graduation rates, especially among Latino students and other students of color. Peer-mentored students who received social and academic support, encouragement, and guidance with college choices had higher rates of degree completion compared to their counterparts from control groups.¹⁷ Peer mentoring programs not only empower mentees, but also provide work experience and leadership opportunities for peer mentors.

Building on this body of knowledge, and at the invitation of Lumina Foundation, the Hispanic Federation and CUNY launched the *CREAR Futuros* Communities of Care Peer-Mentoring and Leadership Development program at four select CUNY colleges. This initiative provides a direct place-based support system for Latino college students that ensure they are connected to individuals and institutions caring for their well being and success. It includes peer-mentoring, academic tutoring, financial aid, leadership development, trainings, internship opportunities and connections to partnering CBO programs and services. With support from the incoming city administration and other funding sources, this program can be brought to scale throughout the CUNY system.



¹⁷ Weinberg, Frankie J. and Lankans, Melanie J. (2011). "Formal Mentoring Programs: A Mentor-Centric and Longitudinal Analysis." *Journal of Management*. 37: 1527-1557.

D. Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)

Nationally and locally, community colleges are struggling greatly to graduate their students on time. Only a quarter of NYC's community college students earn their degree in three years or less.¹⁸ To address this, CUNY launched the Accelerated Study in Associate Program (ASAP) in 2007. Features of ASAP include required full-time study, consolidated course schedules, cohorts grouped by major, comprehensive advisement, academic support, and career development services. Financial incentives include tuition waivers for financial aid, free use of textbooks, and monthly Metrocards for all participants.

The model has experienced tremendous success with 56% of students enrolled in the program graduating within 3 years of matriculation. This program will be serving approximately 4,000 students in the coming semester and should be expanded to cover as many community college students as possible.

E. Single Stop Initiative

The City University of New York has partnered with Single Stop USA to support a Single Stop office at each community college campus. The goal of the project is to increase retention at CUNY community colleges by connecting low-income, degree seeking students with government benefits and services they and their families are entitled to but not receiving. The expectation is that with added resources, students' academic plans will not be derailed in the event they or their families are faced with a financial setback. Between 2009 and 2012, CUNY students accessed benefits including tax refunds, legal services, food stamps, as well as financial counseling valued at \$66 million. Single Stop should be expanded to CUNY's senior college student population, where many Latino and other low-income students attend.

¹⁸ CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2013.

The recommendations in this report are a framework for improving Latino college success in New York City. This is critical because Latinos currently comprise approximately 40 percent of the city's student population. Yet it is precisely this population that is experiencing poor educational outcomes, especially with regards to college readiness, retention and graduation.

This must change, because the city cannot continue as a global capital if a near majority of its citizens are poor and lack the educational tools to help the New York City of the future - their city - grow and flourish. Newly elected Mayor Bill de Blasio argues that New York City has become "A Tale of Two Cities." Unfortunately, he is right. If our city is to regain equality of opportunity and remain a competitive global leader in finance, law, medicine, architecture and other fields, Latino college success - a primary engine propelling career advancement and income mobility - must significantly improve.

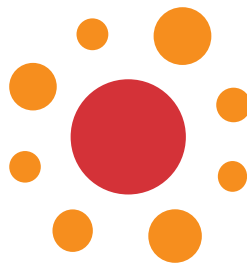
The *Latino CREAR Coalition's* recommendations provide a road map for this improvement. Each recommendation is based on a fundamental reimagining of the relationship between Latinos and their schools. Each reflects the belief that educational success — especially in the Latino community — is a communal effort requiring an alignment of priorities between parents, teachers, CBOs, policymakers and students. Each has a critical role to play in creating the conditions that promote academic success.

"That we're all created equal is the opening line in the American story," President Obama has said. "And while we don't promise equal outcomes, we've strived to deliver equal opportunity - the idea that success doesn't depend on being born into wealth or privilege, it depends on effort and merit."

We most heartily agree. The *Latino CREAR Coalition* is eager to put these educational recommendations into practice - recommendations which can help ensure that Latino students have equal opportunity to succeed based on effort and merit - not income.

We look forward to making Latino college success – and the promise of **a stronger New York City** – a reality.

**For more information or to get involved in the
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