

# Latin American Immigration and U.S. Schools

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## Introduction

Controversy over immigration is as old as immigration itself. Despite our national ideology and the poet's words at the base of the Statue of Liberty ("Give me your tired, your poor . . ."), we are in fact profoundly ambivalent about having in our midst those who look different, speak a different language, and practice different customs. If newcomers are poor and economic times difficult, the mixture becomes especially volatile. Since its founding, the U.S. has experienced waves of foreign immigration, more often than not accompanied by fierce controversy. Most recently, the United States' stated commitment to universal, free, and public education has further complicated matters. Schools, as well as other social agencies and institutions, have become the latest arenas for conflict over immigration policies.

This report has three purposes:

(1) The first section, "Immigration and Its Discontents" provides an overview of the unprecedented Latin American influx of the past two decades and some of the controversy this has created. Interestingly, we can see parallels

between what is happening today and what happened a century ago when an earlier immigration influx set off similar reactions. Controversy over current immigration, much of it from Mexico and Central America, is merely the most recent in a long line. One thing that is new, however, is that schools have become a tool in the immigration debate. Those wanting to cut off immigration, particularly illegal immigration, want to deny public school access to undocumented immigrants.

(2) "Latino Immigrants and U.S. Schools," describes some of the impact of the growing Latino population on schools. The number of Hispanic students has soared, but their level of academic achievement overall is low. By far the most controversial aspect of their schooling centers on bilingual education. The evidence on bilingual education is mixed, but what is often overlooked is that even when instructed in Spanish, Latino students in U.S. schools still tend to do poorly academically. Whatever we might conclude about the benefits of bilingual instruction, these students also need strong academic programs in school. They also need the marshalling of home and family resources to

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improve their achievement. This section concludes by arguing that Hispanic parents are potentially powerful allies for schools, since they bring a strong belief in the value of formal schooling for children's economic and social mobility.

(3) In "A School Change Project" I describe an effort undertaken at an elementary school in Southern California to improve the academic achievement of Latino children of Mexican and Central American origin, who are either immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants. Working in a district that is strongly supportive of bilingual education, but where student achievement still remains low, a collaborative five-year effort involving university researchers and educational practitioners succeeded in substantially improving student achievement schoolwide. The project was based on the assumptions that a strong, academically focused program would improve children's academic achievement and that both educators and parents want much the same thing for students (although they might not always know how to attain it)—high levels of academic attainment. The success of this project suggests lessons for educators facing similar challenges.

## **Immigration and Its Discontents**

*" . . . strange and different foreigners . . . "*

Between 1820 and 1930, nearly 40 million people left their countries of origin and came to the U.S. (Degler, 1970). These great waves of foreign immigration evoked decidedly mixed—if not outright hostile—responses from Americans already here:

With strange and different foreigners spreading throughout the country, congregating in the cities, . . . pushing their way into farms and factories, it was to be expected that there would be a reaction on the part of the native

population. . . . Always it was the numbers of these newcomers which worried the older Americans. (Degler, 1970, pp. 296-297)

The greatest antipathy toward foreigners was reserved for those who came with the least. In the mid-19th century, 90% of all immigration to the U.S. originated from Britain, Ireland, and Germany. While the Germans and British were relatively well off, the Irish were not (North, 1966). It was no accident that the Irish were the most targeted by anti-immigrant nativist groups in Massachusetts (Degler, 1970). The United States was in a depression almost half the years between 1873 and 1900; even during the boom years, few workers could count on full-time work year round (Rosenzweig, Brier, & Brown, 1993).

Of course, the animosity is never simply over economics; strange habits, dress, and language are all unsettling. Referring to anti-immigrant sentiments in Massachusetts, Degler writes:

Underneath the political manifestations of native anxiety regarding these outlanders was the undeniable fact that the immigrants were different. Their dress was queer, their language was either unknown or wrongly accented, . . . and, perhaps most disturbing of all to the natives, their pleasures, like lager beer gardens and St. Patrick's Day revelries, seemed to be at wide variance with what was considered moral in America. (Degler, 1970, p. 298)

On the West Coast, it was the Chinese who raised people's hackles during a period of terrible economic instability. In 1879 Californians voted overwhelmingly—154,638 to 883—to stop Chinese laborers from coming to the U.S. (Rosenzweig et al., 1993). The Congress obliged Californians when it passed the Chinese

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Exclusion Act in 1882. The Act was extended in 1892, and the American Federation of Labor successfully campaigned for a second 10-year extension in 1902, citing “the utter impossibility of our race to compete with the Mongolian”:

Their ability to subsist and thrive under conditions which would mean starvation and suicide to the cheapest laborer of Europe secures to them an advantage which baffles the statesman and economist to overcome, how much less the chances of the laborers pitted in competition against them. (cited in Rosenzweig et al., 1993, “A Clear and Present Danger: The Chinese Exclusion Act,” pp. 5–6)

A San Francisco convention seeking to stop Chinese immigration complained, “They work more cheaply than whites; they live more cheaply; they send their money out of the country to China; most of them have no intention of remaining in the United States, and they do not adopt American manners, but live in colonies, and not after the American fashion . . .”:

Their practical status among us has been that of single men competing at low wages against not only men of our race, but men who have been brought up by our civilization to family life and civic duty. They pay little taxes; they support no institutions, neither school, church, nor theater; they remain steadfastly, after all these years, a permanently foreign element. (cited in Rosenzweig et al., 1993, “Eye on the East: Labor Calls for Ban on Chinese Immigration,” p. 5)

Immigration was a volatile issue indeed in the 19th century. Anti-immigrant and nativist sentiments played important roles in the politics and culture of the day. Office-seekers used immigration and the public’s fear and distrust of

immigrants to their advantage, either cynically or out of genuine conviction. Rhetorical indulgences about preserving the Anglo-Saxon heritage were commonplace (Degler, 1970). Some cast the issue in epochal terms. A 1901 San Francisco convention comprising representatives of county supervisors, city councils, and trade, commercial, and civic organizations around the state—over 1,000 individuals in all—unanimously passed a resolution to the president and congress of the United States urging them to continue excluding Chinese and other undesirable immigrants. In a final section entitled “Our Civilization Is Involved,” the assembly came to this thunderous conclusion:

This is not alone a race, labor, and political question. It is one which involves our civilization and interests the people of the world. The benefactors, scholars, soldiers, and statesmen—the patriots and martyrs of mankind—have builded our modern fabric firmly upon the foundation of religion, law, science, and art. It has been rescued from barbarism and protected against the incursions of barbarians. Civilization in Europe has been frequently attacked and imperiled by the barbaric hordes of Asia. . . . But a peaceful invasion is more dangerous than a war-like attack. We can meet and defend ourselves against an open foe, but an insidious foe under our generous laws would be in possession of the citadel before we were aware. The free immigration of Chinese would be for all purposes an invasion by Asiatic barbarians, against whom civilization in Europe has been frequently defended, fortunately for us. It is our inheritance to keep it pure and uncontaminated, as it is our purpose and destiny to broaden and enlarge it. We are trustees for mankind. (cited in Rosenzweig et al.,

1993, "Eye on the East: Labor Calls for Ban on Chinese Immigration," pp. 14–15)

**Latino Immigration—Legal and Illegal—in the 1980s and 1990s**

If much of the preceding has an oddly familiar ring, it should. The U.S. is now in the midst of another heated, difficult, and complex debate about immigration, society, and culture. As before, in the eyes of some the survival of American civilization itself is at stake (see, for instance, Brimelow, 1995, *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America's Immigration Disaster* and the commentary it has sparked [e.g., Hitchens, 1995; Miles, 1995])<sup>1</sup>. Even the Pope has become involved in the debate over the future of immigration to the U.S., a debate that began shaping the 1996 presidential campaign a year ago (Brownstein, 1995; Stammer & Goldman, 1995).

But today it is largely Latino immigrants, rather than the Irish and the Chinese, who stir controversy and evoke fear and animosity. Without question the large and fast-growing Hispanic population in the United States—particularly that portion originating in Mexico and

Central America—has helped create a crisis at least as acute as the periodic crises created by the arrival of earlier waves of immigrants. The current immigration crisis is more complex in some ways, however, since it is overlaid on a long and troubled history of racism and discrimination suffered by Hispanics, particularly those in the Southwest (Carter, 1970; McWilliams, 1968). From the standpoint of the U.S.'s non-Latino population, it is difficult to disentangle current attitudes toward recent Latino immigration from racist attitudes of the past toward Hispanics who were native to the U.S. or even whose families lived here before the American Southwest became part of the United States. And even within the overall Latino population, as we will see, responses toward the new immigrants have created new tensions and fissures, adding another layer of complexity.

Presently, more than 10% of the total U.S. population—nearly 27 million residents—is of Hispanic<sup>2</sup> origin (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995a). As many scholars have noted, the U.S. Hispanic population is extremely diverse and its numbers difficult to estimate with certainty because of the many undocumented immigrants (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). In general, however, the U.S. Hispanic population

**Table 1. 1994 U.S. Population (in thousands) by Hispanic Origin and Birth Place**

Place of Birth	Total U.S. population <sup>1</sup>	NON-HISPANIC VS. HISPANIC		HISPANIC POPULATION: ETHNICITY-ORIGIN				
		non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Mexico	Puerto Rico	Cuba	Central & South America <sup>2</sup>	Other Hispanic
<b>TOTAL</b>	259,753 (100%)	233,107 (100%)	26,646 (100%)	17,090 (100%)	2,776 (100%)	1,111 (100%)	3,725 (100%)	1,944 (100%)
<b>U.S.-born</b>	233,515 (93.8%)	218,629 (89.9%)	14,823 (55.6%)	10,653 (62.3%)	1,552 (55.9%)	303 (27.3%)	1,044 (28.0%)	1,270 (65.4%)
<b>Foreign- or Puerto Rican-born</b>	23,753 (9.1%)	12,354 (5.3%)	11,399 (42.7%)	6,193 (36.2%)	1,143 (41.2%)	796 (71.6%)	2,624 (70.4%)	642 (33.0%)

<sup>1</sup>Percentages in columns; columns do not add to 100% because persons born in outlying areas (e.g., Guam) or persons born in a foreign country but who had at least one parent who was a U.S. citizen are omitted.

<sup>2</sup>In latest data (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995a) no distinction is made between Central and South American origin. Based on previous breakdowns (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990), we can estimate that the "Central and South American" category is approximately evenly divided between the two.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995a, Table 1

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comprises individuals who were either born in or whose families originated in Mexico, Central or South America, Puerto Rico, Cuba, or other parts of the Caribbean. Of the 27 million Hispanics in the U.S., over 40% are either foreign-born or born in Puerto Rico (see Table 1).

Latino immigration, particularly in those states and regions already with the highest concentration of Latinos (e.g., California, Texas, New York, Illinois, Florida), has helped alter the U.S. demographic landscape over the past quarter century and will continue to do so. Consider the following:

- In 1960 fewer than 600,000 U.S. residents were Mexican-born. In 1994 the Mexican-born population had grown to nearly 6.2 million, more than a tenfold increase. In contrast, the U.S.-born population in the U.S. increased by less than 40% during this period (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975; 1995a, Table 1).
- In 1960 fewer than 50,000 U.S. residents were born in Central America. By 1990 (the most recent year with complete data), they numbered over 1.1 million (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990a, Table 13), a twenty-threefold increase.<sup>3</sup>
- More than 10 million of the foreign-born population in the U.S. (46% of the 23 million total foreign-born) are Hispanic. By far the single largest group within the foreign-born population—6.7 million—is Mexican; the third and fourth largest groups are from Cuba, 805,000, and El Salvador, 718,000 (INS: Numbers, Criminals, Sanctions, 1996; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995b).
- Approximately 2 million of the 4 million illegal immigrants in the U.S. are Latino (“U.S. foreign-born up, immigration down,” 1995; Warren, 1994). Again, Mexicans comprise the single largest group, about 40% of the total illegal immigrant population; Central Americans make up another approximately 18% of total illegal immigrants in the U.S.

- Some states are far more affected by immigration than others. Four states have more than half the foreign-born population living in the U.S.: California has 34.3%; Florida, New York, and Texas together account for another 25.6%. Illegal immigration has also had the greatest impact on California. Its illegal population was estimated in 1994 at 1.6 million. Texas claims 405,000 illegal immigrants, Florida 373,000 (Loh, 1994). The majority of these illegal residents are Latino, but exact numbers are unknown.<sup>4</sup>
- Between 300,000 and 350,000 Hispanic immigrants, mostly from Mexico and Central America, are expected to arrive in the U.S. yearly during the next half century (Day, 1993). By 2010 Hispanics will number more than 40 million individuals; by 2040 over 80 million Hispanics will be living in the U.S., 22% of the U.S. population and more than twice the current percentage. By 2050, nearly 25% of the U.S. population is projected to be Latino (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996a).

Significantly, many Latino immigrants come to this country with low levels of education and few material resources. Mexican and Central American immigrants, who make up nearly a third of the total U.S. Hispanic population and two thirds of the Hispanic immigrant population (see Table 1), tend to have relatively little formal education and are more likely than native-born U.S. residents to be living in poverty. Fewer than 25% of Mexican immigrants and 46% of Central American immigrants have the equivalent of at least a high school diploma; bachelor's degrees are held by only 3.5% of Mexican immigrants and fewer than 9% of Central American immigrants. In contrast, 77% of U.S.-born adults and almost 60% of non-Latin American immigrants have at least high school degrees; over 20% of U.S.-born adults and non-Latin American immigrants have at least a bachelor's degree (“Education and the foreign-born,” 1993). Mexican and Central American immigrants are also more likely to be

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living in poverty: 36% of Mexican and 26% of Salvadoran immigrants—in contrast to only 14% of native-born U.S. residents and 18% of other immigrants—live below the poverty line (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1995b).

### ***Native Reactions: Propositions and Policies to Limit Immigration***

Response to this influx of poor and working-class immigrants is reminiscent of what happened over 100 years ago. Californians, not-so-faintly echoing their 1879 vote to keep Chinese laborers out, resolutely passed Proposition 187 in November 1994. Proposition 187 would not directly exclude immigrants; it was aimed only at preventing illegal immigrants from receiving educational, medical, and other social services. Moreover, Proposition 187 passed by a much narrower—though still a substantial 59% to 41%—margin than the overwhelming 175 to 1 vote a century before. Nonetheless, parallels between the two exist. In a time of economic difficulty, when the number of immigrants is rapidly rising, politicians and the public are uneasy and angry; they want the government to stop what they see as an onslaught. The popular perception is that immigration—particularly illegal immigration—is out of control and wreaking economic havoc. (See Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995, who dissect nativist responses to Latino immigration in the 1990s and challenge the proposition that immigrants, legal and illegal, cost more in services than they contribute in taxes and economic activity.)

The legislative process that ultimately resulted in California's Proposition 187 was showing its earliest stirring by 1993:

Prodded by the slumping California economy and the belief that undocumented immigrants are draining the state treasury, a zealous group of Sacramento lawmakers is carrying an uncommonly large slate of legislation designed to make the state less hos-

pitabile to such newcomers. (Bailey & Morain, 1993, p. A-3).

Zealous politicians were not the only ones wanting to limit immigration. Organized labor and many traditional defenders of minority civil rights also helped create the momentum that led eventually to Proposition 187:

Many black Americans are worried . . . that political gains by new immigrants may come at their expense. Against that backdrop, an expanding number of ethnic leaders have begun to view each other less as oppressed colleagues who must fight together for larger pieces of the pie and more as intense competitors for the same slice of the American Dream. . . . One black observer familiar with the issue who asked that his name not be used [said], "This is a major dilemma for civil rights organizations. There's a lot of tension that over time will intensify." (Fullwood, 1990. p. A1)

Both organized labor and the NAACP supported employer sanctions as a means of reducing illegal immigration when Congress passed the immigration reform bill in 1986 (Fullwood, 1990). In the 1970s even the revered labor leader César Chávez reportedly called illegal immigrants from Mexico a "severe problem" and routinely reported undocumented farmworkers to federal authorities (Silverstein, 1994).

Antagonism toward immigrants is undoubtedly stronger among non-Latinos than Latinos. But despite what many immigrants' rights advocates say, anti-immigration sentiment is not simply masked racial discrimination. Resentment over the influx of new Latino immigrants is strong among many second-, third-, and fourth-generation families in Latino enclaves such as East Los Angeles. Decrying the "wetbacks" they say are taking their jobs and overrunning their neighborhoods, many seem to

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feel as this third-generation Mexican American does:

These things gnaw at us. It's as if someone comes up to you with a gun and takes your money away. The guy with the gun is the immigrant who by his lifestyle is depressing the value of my property by \$15,000 to \$20,000. (Nazario, 1996, p. A1)

Among U.S.-born Mexican Americans, 75% believe too many immigrants are arriving (Nazario, 1996). More than one-third (37%) of California Latinos say that reducing legal immigration to the U.S. would be "a good idea"; 40% support national ID cards to help curb illegal immigration (Tomás Rivera Center, 1996). And almost one-third of California's Latinos supported Proposition 187, the statewide ballot initiative to cut off all services to illegal immigrants (Nazario, 1996).

Proposition 187 was designed to ease the fears and anxieties of Californians worried about immigrants taking jobs, raiding the treasury, and generally becoming ever more intrusive in the state. It would ban illegal immigrants' receiving public education, nonemergency medical care, and social services and require school and other officials to report suspected illegal immigrants to federal authorities. The expectation among supporters of the initiative is, of course, that these measures would discourage further immigration and encourage the early departure of many already here.

At the moment, however, we do not know what effect Proposition 187 will have because it remains tied up in the courts, its fate uncertain. A federal judge in Los Angeles ruled that most of its major provisions conflict with existing federal law. Lawyers and partisans for both sides say that the matter will not be resolved until the case reaches the U.S. Supreme Court (Feldman, 1995). Proposition 187 has created a climate of uncertainty and fear, signaling that most of the state's citizens want to curtail services and

increase education costs to illegal immigrants (McDonnell, 1995), but it has changed nothing procedurally in the state.

With respect to schools, the relevant law is federal and based on *Plyler v. Doe*, a 1982 Supreme Court ruling in a Texas case. The Court held that schools could not refuse school attendance to students based solely on immigration status. In explaining the Supreme Court's reasoning, Justice William Brennan wrote that denying school access to illegal immigrants would lead to "the creation and perpetuation of a subclass of illiterates within our boundaries, surely adding to the problems and costs of unemployment, welfare, and crime" (Pyle & McDonnell, 1996, p. A25).

*Plyler* was used last year to force an Arizona school district to drop its long-standing practice of asking students about their citizenship status and requiring many foreign-born students to obtain visas before enrolling in school (Schnaiberg, 1995). Many believe that Proposition 187 will ultimately be declared unconstitutional on the basis of *Plyler* and constitutional provisions prohibiting states from usurping federal powers.

Nonetheless, a move toward change is underway—and not just in California. As happened in the last century, a strong vote for immigration reform in California seems to presage public and policy shifts nationally. A national 1993 Gallup Poll found that 65% of those surveyed—double the percentage in 1965—favored restrictions on immigration. A 1992 poll found that 68% of respondents thought immigration was now "bad for this country" (Savage, 1995, p. A-23). Many constitutional scholars think *Plyler* is also highly vulnerable. A conservative majority on the Supreme Court and changes in state and national legislation could cause the Court to overturn its earlier decision (Pyle & McDonnell, 1996). Efforts are underway to place Proposition 187-type initiatives on the Florida and Arizona ballots in November ("Florida's Growth," 1996). In the U.S. Congress, Speaker of the House Gingrich has

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“embraced . . . a new Proposition 187–style solution” to illegal immigration (Lacey, 1995, p. A-35). Then in March and April of this year, the House and Senate passed legislation aimed at sharply curtailing illegal immigration by increasing border patrol enforcement, increasing penalties for smugglers and document counterfeiters, and placing tighter controls on public aid.

The House version included a provision, consistent with California’s Proposition 187, that would allow states to deny public education access to students who are in this country illegally (Lacey, 1996; “Senate tackles,” 1996). This provision is unlikely to become law any time soon, however. It was not part of the Senate bill, and President Clinton has vowed to veto any immigration legislation that denies schooling rights to students. Several police organizations have furthermore condemned such a provision (“Senate tackles,” 1996). But its growing appeal nationally and *Plyler’s* increased vulnerability in the courts suggest that this aspect of “immigration reform” will continue to receive attention.

Legal immigration is also a target of reform, although it has not created the furor caused by illegal immigration. Last year a bipartisan commission chaired by the late Texas Congresswoman Barbara Jordan urged cutting by one-third the number of immigrants legally admitted annually to the U.S., from about 800,000 to about 550,000. In order to protect U.S. workers from immigrant labor competition, the commission recommended barring unskilled workers who want to enter for employment purposes and charging a steep fee to employers who wish to hire highly skilled foreign professionals. For a time, the Jordan Commission’s recommendations enjoyed broad-based support: the Clinton administration endorsed them immediately (Hook, 1995), and the House Judiciary Committee approved legislation based on the Commission’s recommendations (Oberlink, 1995). If enacted into law, this legislation would have constituted the first major restrictions on legal immigration in 71 years (Savage, 1995). Congress, however, rejected any changes in legal

immigration, at least in 1996 (“Senate tackles,” 1996). But the debate over immigration, both legal or illegal, is sure to continue into the next century.

## **Latino Immigrants and U.S. Schools**

The schools have felt acutely the effects of the immigration explosion of the past 25 years. Regardless of what ultimately happens with California’s Proposition 187 and the various efforts nationwide to restrict immigration and limit educational access, U.S. schools will undoubtedly have to deal in the foreseeable future with increasing numbers of Latino students, many of them Spanish-speakers. A large and young Mexican– and Central American–origin populace virtually assures growing numbers of Latino students in U.S. schools (Day, 1993). In contrast to the median age of 35 of the white, non-Hispanic population, the median age of the Mexican-descent population is 23, of the Central– and South American–descent population 27 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995a)—prime child-bearing years. Even if immigration were to end altogether, the proportion of Hispanics in the U.S. population would nearly double from 10% today to 18% in 2050 (Archer, 1996). If current immigration patterns continue, by 2030 nearly one-fourth of the school-age children in the U.S. will be Hispanic (Rosenblatt, 1996).

Approximately 6 million Hispanic students, of 50 million students total, are in grades K–12 in U.S. schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1994a). It is estimated that nearly 2 million of these students speak Spanish as their primary language and are not fluent in English (Fleischman & Hopstock, 1993; National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1995). The number of limited-English speakers has risen dramatically over the past two decades and continues to grow. At a time when the size of the general school population has remained essentially stable, the number of limited English pro-

ficient (or “LEP”) students (three-fourths of whom are Spanish speakers) grew by 85% nationwide between 1985 and 1992—from fewer than 1.5 million to almost 2.7 million (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1995).

The growth in California has, again, been most dramatic. From 1981 to 1995, while non-Hispanic enrollment grew slightly more than 10%, the number of Hispanic students in California public schools nearly doubled to more than 2 million students, and the Spanish-speaking LEP population increased by nearly 250% to almost 991,000 (Figure 1). In 1994–95, Spanish-speaking LEP students made up nearly 19% of the total public school enrollment in California.

Schools in Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois have also been profoundly affected by the large surge of immigration in the past two decades; however, limited English proficient students are increasingly becoming a national phe-

nomenon. By the early 1990s they comprised more than 5% of the school-aged population in 11 states (U.S. Department of Education, 1994b, Table 46-2). In the 1991–92 school year, Spanish-speaking students in particular were in nearly 4,500 of the nation’s 15,000 school districts. A majority of these districts—2,758—had at least 50 Spanish-speaking LEP students; more than 1,100 have at least 100 Spanish-speaking LEP students (Fleischman & Hopstock, 1993, Table VI-2). These numbers have almost certainly increased in the past five years. Even in traditionally Caucasian, English-speaking areas such as Utah, Spanish speakers are beginning to have an impact. The number of Latino students in the state has risen 75% over the past decade. A recent article in *Education Week* notes that “the enrollment in Salt Lake’s schools makes it clear that the city has more in common with New York City and Los Angeles than you might imagine” (Lindsay, 1995, pp. 25–26).

Unfortunately, our schools’ response to the

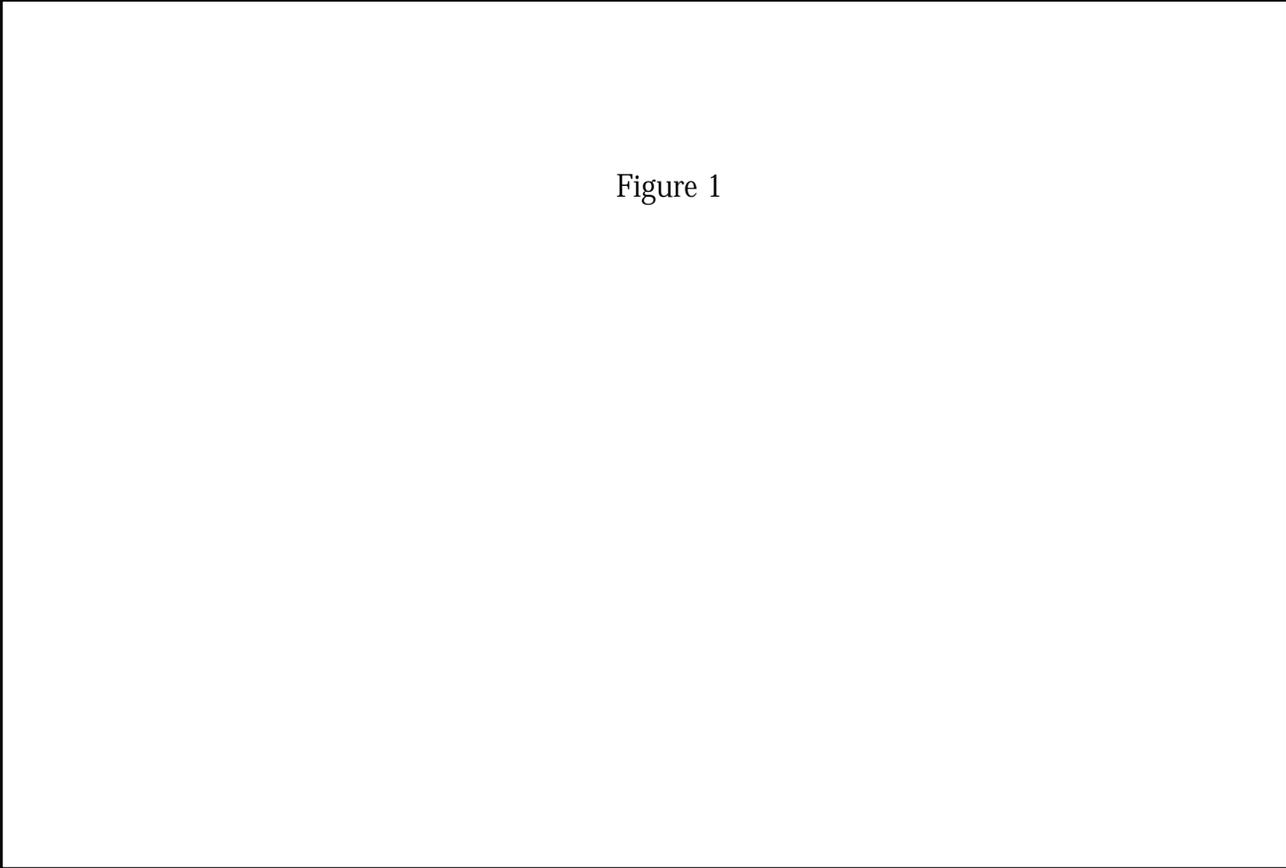


Figure 1

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challenge of non-English-speaking students has been uneven, fitful, and laced with controversies such as those swirling around bilingual education (Crawford, 1991). Critics argue that either by design or default, immigrant and language-minority students have been ignored in current reform efforts (McDonnell & Hill, 1993; Olsen et al., 1994). As noted previously, this is a population that confronts numerous risks, e.g., low levels of formal schooling, high incidence of poverty (U.S. Department of Education, 1995), and various forms of discrimination. Hispanic preschoolers, whether U.S.- or foreign-born (McCarthy & Valdez, 1986), attend preschool at less than half the rate of their white counterparts—17% of all Hispanic 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool, in contrast to 38% of white students (U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

Latino youngsters tend to do poorly in U.S. schools, having lower levels of achievement and higher dropout rates than their white counterparts (Valencia, 1991). Despite some progress over the past 15 to 20 years, 85% of Hispanic fourth and eighth graders still read at a “basic” level or below. Over half score even below “basic,” meaning they cannot demonstrate understanding of a text written at their grade level (Mullis, Campbell, & Farstrup, 1993). Achievement gaps between Latinos—whether they are U.S.- or foreign-born (Kao & Tienda, 1995)—and whites in all academic areas appear early and persist throughout their schooling careers. For example, 17-year-old Latinos read only slightly better than 13-year-old white students (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). The overall picture for students from Spanish-speaking backgrounds is troubling indeed. It is critical, therefore, that we develop and identify effective programs to improve academic achievement for this population of students. Bilingual education was developed precisely to meet this need, but as we will see, bilingual education is not sufficient.

### ***The Bilingual Education Controversy***

Many school programs are failing to help Spanish-speaking children achieve at acceptable levels, even in their native language. But achievement might be even worse when these students are immersed in English, without benefit of opportunities to learn and develop in their first language. Controversial as it is, there is evidence that bilingual education can work: In many studies, children who were taught content and skills in their native language (in this case, Spanish) fared better academically in English; they were able to develop academic skills using Spanish while they were acquiring English language skills (see below). It might seem counter-intuitive that more instruction in Spanish leads to superior outcomes in English; however, we should not forget that sailing west to get to the East was also once considered counterintuitive.

Regardless of the controversy over whether learning in Spanish promotes or retards academic development in English, it is undoubtedly the case that children who are taught in their native language develop higher levels of proficiency in that language than children who are directly immersed in a second language (e.g., English [Legarreta, 1979, and Plante and Skoczylas, as cited in Rossell & Baker, 1996]). Bilingual/biliterate development ought to be seen as a positive outcome of any educational program. Even Rossell and Baker, prominent critics of bilingual education, suggest that “rather than viewing limited English proficient children as a burden, we ought to view them as an opportunity to develop bilingual adults” (1996, p. 35). Whether primary language maintenance and bilingual development come at the cost of timely English acquisition is a question that has generated enormous controversy and awaits definitive answers. (See Rossell & Baker, 1996, for the latest in a long line of scholarly and polemical statements about the effectiveness of bilingual education.)

There is even controversy among Latino parents, increasing numbers of whom are objecting to bilingual education and use of

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Spanish for their children's academic instruction (Schnaiberg, 1996). In a recent nationally publicized incident, Latino parents in a Los Angeles school insisted that their children be taught in English; they worry that Spanish-language instruction will hamper their development in English. The beleaguered school administration defends the current bilingual program, claiming that children are acquiring English sooner than they would with an English immersion program. However, the principal says, "we won't see how well our children gain until five years into the program" (Pyle, 1996, p. A-8). Parents are unconvinced—and worried.

I will not review bilingual education theory and research here. Interested readers are referred to Crawford (1991), *Bilingual Research Journal* (1992), and Rossell & Baker (1996). In brief, however, those who promote using the child's home language extensively in school argue that (1) a child learns most readily in the language he or she knows best, whereas learning new knowledge and skills in English while at the same time trying to learn English can be academically crippling for many; (2) one can learn a great deal academically in one's home language while simultaneously learning how to speak and understand a second language; (3) what one learns in a first language is still known when one learns the second; in fact, what a person learns in a first language actually helps in learning a second, because the second-language learning becomes more meaningful; knowledge and skills learned in the first language are available in—that is, they transfer to—the second language.

Both the theory and practice of bilingual education remain enmeshed in controversy on many levels—substantive, political, ideological, and methodological. Nevertheless, bilingual education can claim successes (Krashen & Biber, 1988). Better-designed and implemented studies are more likely to find positive effects of using children's primary language (e.g., Spanish) for instruction (Willig, 1985). Spanish-speaking students can also start to "catch up" with English-speaking students if they are in bilingual

programs that use Spanish through much of elementary school (Collier, 1992; Thomas, 1992).

Yet evaluations of bilingual education's effects are mixed. Even some of the most successful bilingual education models, such as one pioneered by the California State Department of Education (Gold & Tempes, 1987), sometimes fail to produce desired effects. A reanalysis of the California bilingual education "Case Studies" concluded that at least one of four schools—located in a neighborhood where children heard virtually no English outside school—was less successful in promoting English reading achievement after the introduction of a bilingual education model. The authors of the study argue that the efficacy of bilingual program models depends to some extent on the social and linguistic context of the school and community. If children hear very little English outside school, excessive amounts of time in primary language instruction might indeed delay English acquisition (Samaniego & Eubank, 1991).

In other studies, methodological issues cloud findings. A National Research Council panel concluded, for example, that a national evaluation of bilingual education (Ramírez, 1992) demonstrated that kindergarten and first-grade students who received academic instruction in Spanish had higher achievement in English reading than did comparable students who received academic instruction in English (there were no significant differences in language and mathematics). But high attrition rates and noncomparability of sites and students prevented any valid conclusions past first grade (Meyer & Fienberg, 1992).

Such ambiguity notwithstanding, the fact remains that *many Latino students experience low levels of academic attainment, even when they are taught and tested in Spanish* (Escamilla, 1994; Gersten & Woodward, 1995; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Slavin & Madden, 1995). Nationally, first-grade children tested in Spanish achieve, on average, below two-thirds of their peers tested in English; in the second and third

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grades, still taught and tested in Spanish, they score lower than nearly three-fourths (CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1982, 1988). In Massachusetts, the first state to pass a law promoting bilingual education (in 1971), Hispanic students in bilingual education programs continue to perform well below state and national norms (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1994). “Two-way” bilingual education offers, however, a promising new approach. In two-way programs, the goal is to help both language-minority (e.g., Spanish-speakers) and language-majority (e.g., English-speakers) children develop competence in both languages. Evaluations suggest that these have very positive effects on the academic achievement of Spanish-speaking children, the development of second-language skills among English-speakers, and improved relations among English- and Spanish-speaking students (Christian, 1994).

Whatever we might conclude about the benefits of instructing in the primary language, however, it is evident that even with such instruction many Latino students achieve at unacceptably low levels. Greater poverty and lower levels of parental education place these children at risk for educational underachievement, regardless of instructional language. Our attempted solutions must therefore go beyond bilingual interventions. As noted a decade ago, bilingual education outside the context of an effective school—a school that focuses on academic achievement and stresses effective and sustained leadership, improved instruction, and opportunities for teachers’ professional development—is unlikely to enhance learning for students who traditionally have been poorly served by schools. I will return to this theme in the report’s final section describing a school improvement project in Southern California (Carter and Chatfield, 1986).

*“I want him to have a career,  
a better education . . .”*

Amid this rather bleak scenario, Latino par-

ents represent an invaluable resource for their children’s schooling (Goldenberg, 1987, 1993). They care deeply about their children’s education and could make profound contributions to improving students’ academic achievement. Unfortunately, many educators assume that Latino parents lack the interest, time, and ability to help children succeed in school; they also assume that fundamental differences in values between schools and Latino families create serious obstacles to children’s academic achievement (Grossman, 1984). These assumptions are incorrect.

*Parents want their children to succeed in school.* Contrary to the popular portrait—particularly of Latinos thought to be mired in a “culture of poverty”—Latino parents are extremely interested in their children’s formal schooling (Azmitia et al., 1994; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995). At least at the elementary school level, parents are optimistic about their children’s chances of school success. They want children to do well in school and to obtain as much formal education as possible. They see formal schooling as the way out of poverty and low-level jobs. According to immigrant Latino parents, formal schooling provides job-related qualifications and therefore promotes social and economic mobility. Here are two representative examples of what parents have told us (from Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995):

*Yo quiero que tenga una carrera, que tenga una educación mejor, aunque Ud. sabe ya cuando crecen a lo mejor es más difícil, pero si uno los va empujando desde chicos a que agarren una carrera o sea que empiezen a estudiar más fuerte, para que el día de mañana, uno diga “Bueno ya no tengo nada que dejarles por lo menos darle el estudio para que tenga más oportunidades para ganarse la vida más fácil que uno.”* (I want him to have a career, a better education, although you know that once they get older

maybe it becomes more difficult. But you can start pushing them to have a career from the time they are young, that is, so they'll study harder, so that tomorrow one can say, "Well, I don't have anything to leave them, but at least I gave them an education so that they will have more opportunities and an easier time than I did." (p. 192)

*Yo trato de inculcarles que ellos deben estudiar, porque ya todo lo que sirve es la preparación . . . porque cada día están pidiendo más cosas en los trabajos, depende de lo que dice uno hasta que fue a la escuela así le dan a uno el trabajo, es lo que yo siempre le digo a mi hijo. (I try to inculcate in them that they should study, because what is most valuable is your preparation . . . every day they require more and more at work. Whether they give you the chance of a job depends on what you tell them—how far you went in school. This is what I always tell my son.) (p. 192)*

Parents express the view that education would permit their children "to be somebody" (*"ser alguien en la vida"*), something they feel was denied them because of limited education. Of 54 mothers and fathers interviewed in one study (reported in Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995), all but one expressed dissatisfaction with their own educational attainment. And without exception, parents wanted their children to go further in school than they had gone. When one couple (the mother had completed sixth grade, the father ninth) was asked why they wanted their son to finish high school and attend university, the father answered, "We didn't study, and look at us here" (*"Nosotros no estudiamos, y mírenos acá"*).

*Parents see school success as instrumentally related to positive outcomes for their children—and they are correct.* Data from a subsequent study of 121 Spanish-speaking kindergartners and their

immigrant parents (also from Mexico and Central America) confirm what the above quotes suggest: Parents consider formal schooling as highly consequential for children's futures. Over 90% of the parents said they wanted their children to go to college. When asked whether doing well in school would help children in general and their child in particular to (1) have a better job, (2) make more money, and (3) be happier in his or her life, parents responded overwhelmingly in the affirmative—particularly to the first two questions (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995). There were no differences in parents' ratings of the instrumental value of schooling for children in general and for their child in particular.

Parents' subjective beliefs are objectively correct, at least with respect to education and income. Level of schooling is in fact related to income, no less for Hispanics than for whites (see Table 2). Whites' earnings are greater than that of Hispanics at each educational level, but contrary to what some have claimed (Ogbu, 1974; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995), more education does *not* mean "more inequality" (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995, p. 60). Table 2 shows that while there is a direct relationship between educational attainment and earnings for both whites and Latinos, that is, earnings at each level of education are higher for each group than are earnings at the previous level, there is no such relationship between educational attainment and income disparity between the two groups. Income disparity is smallest for individuals who have not graduated from high school, increases for high school graduates, decreases with some college or an A.A. degree, increases again for college graduates, then finally decreases for those with advanced degrees (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996b).

More to the point, an income increase of more than 20% accompanies each successive educational level for Hispanics. A Hispanic high school graduate, for example, earns 26.1% more than the nongraduate; a Hispanic with an advanced degree earns 77.9% more than the

**Table 2. Mean 1994 Individual Earnings by Educational Attainment, for Hispanics<sup>1</sup> and Whites, White-Hispanic Differences, and Differences over Previous Educational Levels**

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	MEAN EARNINGS		WHITE-HISPANIC DIFFERENCE AT SAME EDUCATIONAL LEVEL		% DIFFERENCE OVER PREVIOUS EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	
	HISPANICS	WHITES	\$ DIFFERENCE	% DIFFERENCE	HISPANICS	WHITES
Not a High School Graduate	\$13,733	\$13,941	\$208	1.5%	—	—
High School Graduate	\$17,323	\$20,911	\$3,588	20.7%	26.1%	50.0%
Some College/AA Degree	\$21,041	\$22,648	\$1,607	7.6%	21.5%	8.3%
BA Degree	\$29,165	\$37,996	\$8,831	30.3%	38.6%	67.8%
Advanced Degree	\$51,898	\$56,475	\$4,577	8.8%	77.9%	48.6%
Column mean for % differences	—	—	—	16.9%	41.0%	43.7%

Hispanic with a B.A. Overall, the mean percent increase in income from one educational level to the next is nearly identical for Hispanics and whites (41.0% and 43.7%, respectively) and nearly two and one-half times the mean difference between Hispanics and whites (16.9%) at comparable educational levels (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996b).

The persistent income disparity between Hispanics and whites, even at identical levels of schooling, clearly suggests the presence of discrimination and possibly other factors that contribute to depressed earnings of Hispanics. But the data also demonstrate what parents in our studies believe and have told us repeatedly—school attainment is strongly related to increased economic well-being for their children. This salient fact contributes to parents' high levels of motivation for their children's school success. Real and perceived inequality plays little, if any, role in parents' perceptions of the value of formal schooling.<sup>5</sup>

*Parents want to be involved in their children's schooling.* Immigrant Latino parents express considerable satisfaction when a teacher makes the effort to involve them in their child's academic development. At least in elementary school, the possibility of productive home-school collaboration for this population of students is considerable, probably much greater than many educa-

tors realize (Goldenberg, 1987). For example, teachers' attempts to involve parents in children's learning in kindergarten (by sending home notes, materials, suggestions, homework) is positively associated with parents' satisfaction with the kindergarten class. Moreover, teachers' attempts to involve parents in children's learning are positively associated with kindergarten literacy development (Goldenberg & Arzubiaga, 1994). Once children enter elementary school, we find that parents are highly supportive of homework. Their ratings of homework quality and of how well informed they feel about their child's academic progress and the classroom curriculum are all positively related to satisfaction with their child's school experience (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995).

Parents' positive attitudes toward formal schooling, their high aspirations for children's academic success, and their eagerness to be involved in their children's formal education mean that schools have available a hugely important resource that can help provide a foundation for substantially improving Latino youngsters' academic attainment. The final section describes how a collaborative venture involving educators and university researchers built upon that foundation.

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## **A School Change Project**

The remainder of this report describes an approach to improving the achievement of Latino students that creates, within a bilingual education setting, an explicit, schoolwide focus on improving achievement. The starting point of our efforts lay in our early findings documenting parents' attitudes toward their children's academic achievement.

Our approach has built upon the common interests of educators and Latino families. As described above, parents want very much for their children to succeed in school. We took these findings to heart in setting out to promote enhanced academic development for students schoolwide. We assumed that parents would fully support rigorous efforts to improve student learning. Parents, in fact, sometimes had expressed to us concern over what they perceived to be low standards and levels of learning in this country (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991a). Latino parents seem to want for their children what most parents want—a solid academic program that helps children achieve high levels of literacy and increases their chances of success at subsequent stages of schooling. This is what we set out to accomplish.

Colleagues and I undertook this “school change” project beginning in 1990 (Goldenberg & Sullivan, 1994). Although national and state action must also address many of the issues regarding Spanish-speaking children and their education (McDonnell & Hill, 1993), much can be done locally to improve schooling outcomes for these students.

### ***The School and Its Students***

Freeman Avenue School (a pseudonym) is one of five elementary schools in a small, heavily Latino school district in Southern California. The district's 27,000 mostly low-income inhabitants occupy an area of less than 1.2 square miles, giving this unincorporated portion of Los Angeles County a population density over twice

that of the surrounding metropolitan area. Since 1968 the district has experienced a virtual explosion in student population and fundamental changes in ethnic composition. As a “port of entry” district, it has been profoundly affected by the influx of Latin American immigration. District enrollment has climbed from less than 3,000 mostly white, English-speaking students in 1968 to nearly 6,000 mostly Hispanic and limited English proficient (LEP) students today.

Freeman's demographic makeup reflects that of the district overall: 95% of the school's more than 800 students are Hispanic; 93% come from homes where Spanish is the dominant language; 86% of students are LEP; 89% qualify for free school meals; and another 7% qualify for reduced-priced meals. Hispanic parents—mostly from Mexico and about one-fifth from Central America—have, on average, about 7 years of formal schooling; non-Hispanic parents work in skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled occupations, suggesting they too have low levels of schooling. Although virtually all Latino parents are immigrants, 75% of the children were born in the U.S.

When our project began in 1990-91, average achievement at the school was below state, national, and district norms. Despite an established and well-regarded bilingual education program, students at Freeman scored between the 7th and 15th percentiles on statewide tests of reading, writing, and mathematics.

### ***Improvements in Literacy Achievement***

Within 3 years of the beginning of our project, achievement at Freeman surpassed the rest of the district and in some subject areas matched or surpassed state and national norms. Although much work remains to be done in improving student academic achievement—particularly in helping students make a successful transition from Spanish to English instruction—we have seen meaningful and important progress. For example:

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- In 1990 only 31% of Freeman's first-grade students learning to read in Spanish were on grade level in Spanish reading, according to standardized testing; in the rest of the district, 41% of students were on grade level in Spanish. By the time this cohort of students reached third grade (still reading in Spanish), 61% of Freeman students were reading at or above grade level, while only 49% of the cohort in the rest of the district were reading on grade level according to nationally standardized tests (Goldenberg & Sullivan, 1994).

- Before the project began, Freeman students scored below the state and district on tests given in 1989 and 1990 to all fourth graders by the California State Department of Education. By 1993 students at Freeman outperformed students in the rest of the district and did nearly as well as students around the state: 28% of Freeman fourth graders scored at the highest levels (4 and above on a 6-point measure), compared to 17% of students in the rest of the district and 30% statewide (Goldenberg & Sullivan, 1994).

- In 1992 students at Freeman did no better than students around the district on literacy assessments developed for the project to gauge students' reading and writing abilities. Only 31% of Freeman's and 33% of the rest of the district's second through fifth graders could, in whichever language they were receiving instruction, write summaries demonstrating at least a basic understanding of expository and narrative texts, effectively write a summary of a story they had previously read, and demonstrate at least basic profi-

ciency in using written conventions (spelling, punctuation, etc.). In 1995 nearly half (49%) of the second through fifth graders at Freeman could read and write at these levels, while among comparable students around the district, only 25% demonstrated these competencies (Saunders, 1995).

- In 1992 Freeman students reported they had only voluntarily read 5.3 items (books, magazines, stories, etc.) during the previous year, while in the rest of the district, students reported reading 9.5 items. In 1995 Freeman students reported reading on their own an average of 13 items over the preceding year; students in the other district schools averaged slightly more than 7 (Saunders, 1995).

- More informally, educators and others around the district have commented on the improved academic climate and level of achievement at Freeman. One district administrator who supervised summer school, for example, noted that Freeman students were on a higher level academically than other students in the district.

How did the school achieve these results? The answer, in simplest terms, is that the school principal, the researchers, and a group of teachers set out several years ago to involve the entire faculty in a coherent and concerted schoolwide effort aimed precisely at improving achievement. Raising literacy levels at the school was our unambiguous goal and would be the measure of success. Not all the academic problems at the school are solved by any means, but the school is making progress by using a straightforward approach that builds on *both* the community's and educators' desires to help students succeed in school.

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Figure 2

### ***A Model to Guide School Change Efforts***

We were guided in our work by a four-element “change model” developed in collaboration with the school’s principal (Goldenberg & Sullivan, 1994; Sullivan, 1994). The model was aimed at providing overall coherence to the school’s efforts to change, something that is often missing in the current patchwork of attempts to reform or “restructure” schools. Fullan, Bennett, and Rolheiser-Bennett put their finger on a fundamental challenge facing would-be reformers: “The greatest problem faced by school districts is not resistance to innovation, but the fragmentation, overload, and incoherence resulting from the uncritical acceptance of too many different innovations which are not coordinated” (1990, p. 19).

As in many schools over the past decade, particularly those with large numbers of so-called “at-risk” students, a steady downpour of initiatives and changes had fallen on school personnel at Freeman, leaving teachers feeling over-

loaded, fragmented, and overwhelmed. With our model of change we sought to provide focus and cohesion, unifying the different activities and initiatives at the school under a common purpose: improving student achievement.

The model is derived from research on effective schools and educational change and from our own experiences working in school settings with this population of students. It consists of four “change elements” that we hypothesized could influence teachers’ thoughts and behaviors, thereby influencing student outcomes: *goals* that are set and shared; *indicators* that measure success; *assistance* by capable others; and *leadership* that supports and pressures. Versions of three of the elements—goals, indicators, and leadership—have long been associated with efforts to improve school effectiveness. The other—“assistance by others”—has begun to receive attention more recently (see Fullan, 1985, 1991; Loucks-Horsley & Mundry, 1991; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). We predicted that these four elements could be used to influence teacher attitudes (e.g., expectations, sense of

efficacy, attributions) and behaviors (e.g., teaching practices, parent contacts, interactions with students) known to influence important student outcomes, such as achievement and attitudes (see Figure 2).

There is nothing specific to Spanish-speaking or immigrant students about this model. To the contrary, goals, indicators, assistance, and leadership constitute a generic set of dimensions for “leveraging” sustained, coherent change, regardless of the particular population.

Setting *goals* (element 1, Figure 2) is a venerable practice in 20th-century American education (Tyler, 1949), and more recent educational scholarship supports the idea that common and mutually understood goals are vital for successful change efforts (Carter & Chatfield, 1986; Good & Brophy, 1986; Peterson & Lezotte, 1991). Cognitive models of behavior (e.g., Deci, 1975; Weiner, 1980) suggest that goal-setting matters because goals affect behavior.

Similarly, *indicators* (element 2) of success used in assessing student progress toward goals can effect improvement in student outcomes (Good & Brophy, 1986; Peterson and Lezotte, 1991; Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Livermon, & Dolan, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Indicators complement goals by reinforcing their importance and helping gauge progress.

*Assistance* (element 3) is also key to successful change. Recent findings highlight the importance of mutual assistance among fellow professionals as a component of successful change—in contrast to traditional bureaucratic approaches, where administrators set policies and guidelines and then hold teachers “accountable” (Rowan, 1990). Existing models for assisting teacher development reject in-services and one-shot workshops in favor of longer-term approaches. Emphasis is on presenting new information, creating settings that encourage discussion and analysis of practice, and providing opportunities to attempt and reflect upon new behaviors (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991b).

Finally, *leadership* (element 4) is the ele-

ment most closely associated with efforts to make schools more effective. A principal’s leadership has consistently emerged as the most potent factor in the school-change equation (e.g., Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Bickel, 1983; Bliss, Firestone, & Richards, 1991; Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 1991). We hypothesized that in the context of the three other change elements—goals, indicators, and assistance—leadership would produce a tension between *pressuring* on the one hand and *supporting* on the other. The skillful principal, indeed, the skillful leader, will know when to exercise one or the other or both simultaneously. This is perhaps the most elusive but important aspect of leadership (see, e.g., Blase, 1987; Bliss et al., 1991; Huberman, 1983; Miles, 1983).

Although Freeman had a well-regarded bilingual education program in place, teaching the children in their home language was not sufficient, alone, to promote high levels of academic achievement. We expected that the change model, operating within a school that recognizes the validity of children’s native language and builds upon teachers’ and parents’ interest in improving academic attainment, would create a school community where teachers would find new ways to help their students achieve better. We furthermore expected that parents, given their expressed beliefs in the importance of school success, would support efforts to improve academic achievement. Experience over the past several years has borne out these expectations.

### ***Operationalizing the Model***

A brief account of how the change model was operationalized at Freeman follows. (For more detail, see Goldenberg & Sullivan, 1994.)

*Goals.* Beginning in 1990 and extending over the next two years, an Academic Expectations Committee (AEC), made up of teachers, administrators, and a researcher, met together to conceptualize and put into practice a literacy curriculum with reading and writing goals and

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expectations. The school's faculty advisory council and entire faculty participated in the process. A final step involved meeting with parents, both English- and Spanish-speaking, to solicit their reactions both to the overall idea of stipulating goals and expectations and their specific responses to the grade-level items in the draft. Parents were extremely positive. One parent said she felt "our standards are a lot lower" than they should be and that "we really need to push our children." She saw the establishing of expectations as going in exactly the right direction.

The parents urged the AEC to write more "parent-friendly" versions—"mas claro y en pocas palabras" ("clearer and in fewer words")—and to distribute these at "back-to-school night." In September 1992 we did as they suggested. Overheads highlighting the goals and expectations were prepared and hard copies made available—which many parents asked for. When they visited their child's classroom, they got "parent-friendly" versions for that grade level. Several teachers commented that parents came into their rooms that evening more enthused than they had ever seen them.

The school's goals reflect a developmental perspective on literacy (Chall, 1983). Children do more than acquire new knowledge and skills over time; their understandings change qualitatively and grow in complexity and sophistication. Fostering literacy thus involves striking a balance between helping them understand the forms and functions of literacy (e.g., that written texts communicate meaning) and helping them acquire the skills required to be literate (e.g., decoding words, using accepted writing conventions). A kindergartner, for instance, is expected to be able to read or "pseudoread" at least a half-dozen favorite story or picture books; know the letters and sounds of the alphabet; begin making rudimentary attempts to write or dictate narratives; and ask and answer questions about favorite books. By fifth grade the student is expected to be able to understand, appreciate, and discuss works from different literary genres; read for pleasure a range of books and other

materials; have an extensive reading vocabulary, particularly in areas of personal interest; compose (drafting and redrafting as needed) original stories with conflicts and resolutions; and keep a daily journal of personal experiences.

*Indicators.* Numerous indicators are used to gauge progress. One of these, "reading book placement," is the grade-level designation of the basal reader the student is currently reading. We had found in an earlier study that when reading achievement improves, students are more likely to be on grade level in their book placement (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991a).

The Academic Assessment Committee (AAC), made up of teachers, administrators, and researchers, succeeded the AEC and developed other more specific assessment strategies to gauge progress schoolwide. These indicators include yearly spring assessments of independent reading and attitudes toward reading and writing; writing summaries and original story endings; comprehending narrative and expository passages; and use of written conventions. Spring assessment results are shared the following fall with the entire faculty. English and Spanish standardized test scores are also available, although these are not explicitly tied to the goals and expectations.

*Assistance.* Several types of assistance have been provided to teachers as part of the schoolwide effort to raise academic achievement. For example, all teachers in the school participate in a workgroup of their choice focusing on some curricular or instructional topic, e.g., math, language arts, cooperative learning, or thematic or integrated teaching. Workgroups have become part of the school culture. They provide a consistent setting throughout the year where teachers can discuss and refine strategies for improving teaching and learning, consistent with the overall goals of the project.

Assistance is provided in many other settings. At grade-level meetings throughout the year, teachers meet with their AEC representatives to learn how to score and analyze student writing samples. Collaborating researchers have

assisted the principal in setting direction and have assisted committee members and the entire faculty in developing goals and indicators. Workshops and in-services also provide assistance by addressing specific strategies, explicitly related to the overall school effort, for improving student achievement, e.g., techniques for improving writing and reading, using homework and parent involvement, using dictation, and interpreting achievement data.

All of these activities converge on the single, unifying objective: improving student learning in the language arts within a framework created by goals and expectations for student learning. As one teacher commented at the end of the project's third year, "Everything, it all comes together. . . from the very general to very specific, and yet, back to the general, because everyone knows what everyone's doing, and you have your meetings, and then you meet with other people and you see what they are doing. It's like one big classroom instead of one big school" (Sullivan, 1995, p. 1).

*Leadership* is perhaps the first among equals of the four change elements. It is difficult to see how *goals* can be articulated and widely accepted, *indicators* developed and implemented, and *assistance* systematically and strategically provided in the absence of leadership at the school site. Leadership at Freeman has been provided by numerous individuals, most prominently, the principal, who has managed to skillfully push at times and hold back at others. Teachers perceived the principal's *supportive* role as much more salient than her *pressuring* role (Sullivan, 1995). They saw her providing direction while giving autonomy, sharing decisionmaking, and being fair—qualities that made them feel secure, trusted, valued, and equal with their colleagues.

The researcher-consultants also provided leadership (as well as assistance) in helping the committees develop goals and assessments. Teachers at the school, especially those who served on the Academic committees or who led workgroups, also played leadership roles. For the first time, they were being called upon to ask

fellow teachers to change some of their practices and beliefs. Many teachers found this role challenging and even unsettling.

### **Parent Reactions**

As expected, parents have been very positive about schoolwide efforts to improve academic achievement. In the spring of 1995 several Latino parents of fifth-grade students who had been at Freeman since kindergarten were asked to comment on how things at the school had changed over the past few years. Here are sample responses (Goldenberg & Jiménez-Hami, 1995):

*Sí, siempre están tratando de mejorar todo en general, agarrar nuevas técnicas para que el niño se pueda desenvolver mejor. Nuevas cosas en general. Cuando uno va al "meeting" uno se da cuenta y se entera de lo nuevo. (Yes. They are always trying to improve things in general, use new techniques so that children will develop competently. New things in general. When you go to the meetings, you realize [what is happening] and you find out about these new things.)*

*Sí . . . hace tres o cuatro años no habían tantas ideas. (Yes . . . three or four years ago there weren't as many ideas [about how to help children succeed in school].)*

*O sí [la escuela ha cambiado] demasiado. . . . En los estudios han trabajado mucho con los estudiantes. Las maestras se han superado mucho. O sea me he fijado por otras escuelas hay niños que están en segundo y tercer grado y no saben leer y escribir. Aquí se les exige mucho y aprenden más rápido. (Oh, yes, [things at Freeman have changed] very much. . . . They [the teachers] have worked*

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very hard with the students. The teachers have really excelled. I have noticed that at other schools there are children in second and third grade who cannot read or write. Here they really expect a lot and the children learn more rapidly.)

### **Teacher Reactions**

Teachers have also responded positively to the project, both reflecting and probably further contributing to the achievement changes. In spring 1994, when asked in a year-end survey how they thought things were going in the school's efforts to improve student achievement, 90% of the teachers responded with a 4 or 5 (5=extremely well). Following are sample comments from teachers, collected over several years of the project:

*Raising expectations.* One teacher who was initially skeptical of the entire effort made this observation at the end of the project's second year:

At first the teachers said, how is this possible? Our kids can't do this. Then [the principal] gave her support, her statement at the large faculty meeting . . . At first I was skeptical and worried, but now I think these expectations give us the opportunity to shoot for more. Now teachers who were afraid of this are willing to work together.

*Focusing on goals.* Other teachers hold that the goals and expectations help them set priorities in the face of overwhelming responsibilities:

I've always felt the problem of getting it all in. You know, it's like what goes on the back burner. . . . Now, because of the goals and expectations, . . . I'd say I am more focused.

*Learning skills and strategies.* We also have

reports of important changes in teaching:

In the writing group that I'm in . . . every single meeting we discuss what we've done in our classroom, we discuss how to make it better, we discuss where we want our kids to go after that, we discuss so we know what the teachers are working on . . . we pick up new ways to get across skills, we pick up new types of lessons to do, to address what our goals are in a particular subject area.

And the use of a still-powerful strategy, homework:

The upper grade teachers have always given homework, but now they give more of it and they give it more consistently. . . . I think the students respond positively—they're more serious and responsible about schoolwork when they have homework regularly. The homework in-service reminded teachers how homework fits into classroom lessons, how valuable homework is for the kids.

*Improving the climate.* A second-grade teacher observed in the second year of the project, "The climate has definitely improved. I received a lot of support—praise and positive feedback—from the second-grade teachers for working on academic expectations." A colleague, who the year before could not get away from the school and staff quickly enough, noted, "The school climate is much more positive—there's much less overload." And finally, one veteran teacher observed, "Our school is the best place it's been since it started. There's a real different feeling, a different atmosphere."

*Experiencing success.* In line with teachers beginning to see a real difference in students' performance, one teacher made this observation:

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From the children I've seen coming in here from other districts that must be similar to ours, I don't think that a lot of places put such an emphasis on academic achievement. [They might just assume] the LEP child may be an economically disadvantaged child. There's more of an acceptance . . . They're just going to be a year or two behind. [Here, the principal] doesn't accept that or just give up. There's no surrendering. We keep trying. We keep trying. And I think we've been pretty successful so far.

### **Conclusion: Education Is Cheaper Than Ignorance**

Bilingual education, Latinos, immigration, limited English proficient students—these have become flashpoints for public-policy and educational debates from the West to the East coast, from the lowest to the highest levels of government, and from school-board elections to presidential politics. It's too bad that these debates have dissipated so much energy that otherwise could go toward helping large numbers of immigrant children and the children of immigrants succeed and prosper in our schools and in society. The "Doe" children of *Plyler v. Doe*—who were permitted to resume their schooling following a court order from a Texas federal judge—are now productive, tax-paying citizens, "a little like many other blue-collar schoolchildren across small-town America" (Feldman, 1994 need page #). Even former Tyler (TX) superintendent James Plyler, who lent his name to the case and supported the children's expulsion, has changed his mind about trying to keep immi-

grant children—whether legal or illegal—out of school: "If we don't provide education, children will be a greater burden and cost more in the long run," he told a reporter in 1994. "For taxpayers, it's either pay me now, or pay me later" (Feldman, 1994, need page #).

More of these students could undoubtedly be helped to do even better academically, and to the extent they do, the entire society would benefit. A few efforts, such as the one described in this report, have been undertaken to demonstrate that effective instruction, curriculum, schoolwide organization, and home-school collaboration can have substantial positive effects on Spanish-speaking children's academic achievement (see also Carter & Chatfield, 1986; Dianda & Flaherty, 1995; Gold & Tempes, 1987). Intensive local efforts are not enough, however. These must be combined with long-term, systematic research and evaluation in multiple sites to document effects on student outcomes. And last, state- and national-level policymakers must develop initiatives to deal constructively with the issues educators face as they work to provide effective and equitable educational opportunities for immigrant and language-minority students (e.g., McDonnell & Hill, 1993).

The challenge of educating Spanish-speaking children grows daily. We can and we must bring about meaningful change for these students, even those who come to school not knowing a word of English. Given the large and growing number of these students, American civilization might indeed depend on our response to this challenge. "It has never been demonstrated," the California State Board of Education said in a 1981 legal brief supporting the Texas schoolchildren in *Plyler*, "that education is more expensive than ignorance" (Feldman, 1994, need page #).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1995), who draw similar parallels between past and current immigration waves and responses to them.

<sup>2</sup> “Hispanic” is a heterogeneous category used by the Census Bureau to designate persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish descent, regardless of race. Approximately two-thirds of the U.S. Hispanic population is Mexican or Mexican-origin (see Table 1 in text). There is actually considerable inconsistency and even controversy over the appropriate term to use when referring to the Spanish-speaking or Latin American-origin populations in the U.S. Many members and leaders of the community advocate use of the term “Latino” (del Olmo, 1989; “Hispanic or Latino?” 1989; Smith, 1988). A popular magazine, *Hispanic*, uses both terms. For example, on a recent cover *Hispanic* announced its lead article as “To have or not to have? Latinas debate motherhood” (*Hispanic*, 1995). The Tomás Rivera Center, a respected think tank based in California and Texas, uses both terms, apparently interchangeably. One recent report was entitled, *The Latino vote at mid-decade*; another *California Hispanic perspectives*.

There is ample precedent for either term, and the matter, most likely, is one of personal or ideological preference. The populations I refer to in this report may be accurately referred to as either “Latino” or “Hispanic.”

<sup>3</sup> The number of Central Americans has continued to increase throughout the 1990s. Salvadoran-born residents alone, who in 1990 numbered 465,000, in 1994 were 718,000 strong (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990a, Table 13; 1995b, Table 5); immigrants from Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and other Central American countries almost certainly increased as well.

<sup>4</sup> The exact number of illegal immigrants is impossible to calculate. The Immigration and Naturalization Service estimates that 4.3 million illegal immigrants currently reside in the U.S. and that the number is growing by about 300,000 per year (J. Evans, personal communication, April 3, 1996). There are no current breakdowns by country of origin (INS Press Office, personal communication, March 14, 1996). The most recent estimates of illegal immigration, which are also broken down by country of origin and U.S. state of res-

idence, are for 1992 (Warren, 1994). The Census Bureau does not ask about legal immigration status in its surveys (K. Hansen, U.S. Bureau of the Census, personal communication, March 11, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> John Ogbu (1974) first propounded the thesis that for “caste-like” minorities such as African-Americans and Latinos, the economic benefits of formal education were disproportionately low compared to the benefits for whites. This fact, Ogbu argues, depresses minority group members’ school achievement motivation. Whites can expect a high return on their educational investment, and each successive level of attainment brings enhanced economic and social rewards. Because of racism and discrimination, however, the rewards of formal schooling are much more tenuous for caste-like minorities, according to Ogbu, with more formal schooling translating into greater social and economic inequity. Consequently, members of these minority groups are less motivated to expend effort in school, and they therefore do less well academically. More recently, this thesis has been articulated by Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1995) in their study of achievement motivation among Latino adolescents.

The thesis is compelling but not supported by available data, as the present discussion and Table 2 show. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco use U.S. Census data for high school and college graduates only, which give an incomplete picture. In addition, the data they use compare white *males* and Hispanics *overall* (both males and females), which confuses the issue since both ethnicity and gender are strongly and independently related to earnings differentials. It was impossible to verify the precise basis for their comparison, however, since the source they cite (Hollman, cited in Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995) does not actually report income by educational attainment (Hollman, personal communication, May 20, 1996). In any case, even Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco’s data show that income rises as education level rises for both whites and Hispanics. This, for the parents, seems to be the critical fact, more than workplace discrimination.

One final point: There seems to be considerable disagreement among Hispanics as to the degree of discrimination they suffer in the job world. In a recent poll, a majority of California Hispanics (56%) thought “that a Latino in [their] community has as good a chance as an Anglo in getting a job for which they are both qualified.” Forty percent disagreed (Tomás Rivera Center, 1996).

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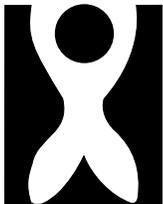
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Latin American Immigration Association, Torrance, California. 4,530 likes · 17 talking about this · 147 were here. The LAIA is the leading trade... How To Become An Immigration Consultant. The LAIA is the #1 National Trade Association for Immigration Services Professionals. We offer educa See More. CommunitySee All. Immigration from Latin America”and the attendant growth of the nation's Hispanic or Latino population”are two of the most important and controversial developments in the recent history of the United States. Expanding from a small, regionally concentrated population of fewer than 6 million in 1960 (just 3.24 percent of the U.S. population at the time), to a now widely dispersed population of well more than 50 million (or 16 percent of the nation's population), Latinos are destined to continue to exert enormous impact on social, cultural, political, and economic life of the U.S.[1]Alth Resentment about immigration”most of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are Latinos”helped fuel the political shifts that sent Trump to the White House. Most Latino people in Wilder will tell you they”ve always gotten along well with their white neighbors. Things haven”t changed much since Trump was elected in 2016, they say. The American border, always in sight, stood as both a beacon and a taunt. The migrants had requested refuge there, but had been sent back by the administration of former President Donald J. Trump and told to wait in Mexico. So, with President Biden now in the White House, migrants who had wept with joy and relief at his election hoped he would transform immigration policy and improve their chances of getting into the United States. But only days into Mr. Biden”s term, many of those same migrants have already grown impatient, their optimism souring to disappointment. “They said, “If we win, we” The Latin American Immigration Association (LAIA) is the nation”s only Latino-focused, immigration industry trade association dedicated to providing quality education, training, support, advocacy and networking opportunities to immigration service professionals nationwide. Our students, members and supporters come from all segments of immigration service practitioners, including immigration forms preparers, immigration attorneys, immigration paralegals, and BIA authorized organizations, church groups and individuals. Our organization serves and welcomes all individuals and groups who are dedic