

UNIDOS US

STRONGER COMMUNITIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

LATINO STUDENT SUCCESS

Advancing U.S. Educational
Progress for All



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Foreword

In recent years, the story of Latinos in the U.S. educational system has been one of steady gains in academic achievement, high school graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment. But it was not always that way. Progress has been made as a result of tireless advocacy by the Latino community and the determination of students and families to pursue their educational dreams.

For five decades, UnidosUS has assembled research and statistics to inform policymakers, community-based organizations, and advocates about the state of Latino education to help develop and administer educational programs and efforts that improve how schools serve Latino kids and parents. Our goal has always been to identify and eliminate the systemic barriers to educational achievement that have held back Latino students and widened racial and ethnic inequality across the nation.

The proportion of Hispanic K-12 students in U.S. schools has increased three-fold, from 9% in 1984 to 28% today. And high school graduation rates for Latinos reached an all-time high in 2019 of nearly 82%. Yet deep inequalities remain, and too many Latino young people continue to face barriers to opportunity.

This report comes at a pivotal time as our schools and communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately impacted Latino students and their families. We cannot allow hard won educational gains to be reversed, yet we also know that the pre-pandemic status quo was not working as well as it should. That is why we are outlining a bold agenda to reimagine how the education ecosystem can better serve today's Latino students so that they are prepared for success in high school, postsecondary education, and beyond.

When we invest in the success of Latino students, we are investing in the future of our country. We are investing in student-centered learning that recognizes the strengths our children bring to the classroom. We are investing in inclusive and welcoming schools that cultivate a positive climate for development and learning and prioritize student well-being. We are investing in strengthening relationships with families who know their children best. In short, when we invest in Latino students, we are investing in a stronger education system for all students, and for our nation—and the time to start is now.



Janet Murguía
President and CEO
UnidosUS

Introduction

Our nation's schools stand at a crossroads. For the past three academic years, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted learning and the relationships between teachers, students, families, and communities that are at the heart of education. Even as school buildings reopened to in-person instruction, periodic quarantines, social distancing, and canceled events had a profound impact on students' academic achievement and mental wellness.

For Latino students—the largest ethnic group in our nation's schools—the pandemic threatened to undermine decades of steady educational progress. At the same time, many of the inequities in America's schools that were present before the pandemic remain. For example, Latino students are less likely to attend a high-performing school than non-Latino white students, and Latinos remain disproportionately underrepresented among America's teachers.

As we look ahead, this report highlights how policymakers can prioritize the needs of the Latino student population, and in doing so, create a stronger, more equitable education system for all students. Boosting academic achievement, closing the homework gap, and creating inclusive and welcoming schools must be priorities. States and the federal government must continue to measure

and track student progress and recovery from the pandemic, providing support to school communities to close persistent opportunity gaps.

Yet as the Latino student population grows to nearly one in three students by the end of the decade, the opportunity is even greater. Latino students have skills that are critical to success in the workplace, including the ability to navigate across cultural and linguistic differences. When schools cultivate and strengthen these assets, instead of viewing them through a deficit lens, they can better support students for success in today's economy.

To do this effectively, Latino families must be a part of the conversation about the future of education. Latino parents view education as essential to their social and economic mobility, and they have high aspirations for their children. Yet many parents face barriers to greater involvement—including time, knowledge of the education system, and linguistic hurdles. Here again, more robust support for Latino parents will enhance all learning communities and create more accessible opportunities for engagement.

Latino children are an important part of the country's future. As we continue to rebuild our schools following the pandemic, their success will contribute to a more dynamic and prosperous America.

Today's Latino Students



Latino Students Bring a Wealth of Assets and Diversity of Experience to Schools

Latino^a students are a growing part of America's public schools. Between 2009 and 2020, the percentage of Latino public-school students increased from 22% to 28%, and this figure is expected to reach 30% by 2030.¹ Young Latinos are America's future entrepreneurs, leaders, and innovators. Their success in school is a measure of how well our education system supports student populations rich in cultural diversity, talents, and strengths.

While there are some demographic characteristics that unite the Latino student population—for example, nearly all (94%) of Latino children under age 18 are U.S.-born citizens²—these students represent a range of racial and national backgrounds, identities, and socioeconomic circumstances. Although most Hispanic children in the U.S. (70%) are of Mexican descent, Latino students trace their family heritage to Puerto Rico, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and other Central and South American countries.³ Many Latino students have multiple racial and ethnic identities and are among three million Latinos in the U.S. who self-identify as Black.⁴ A growing share of young adults also identify as LGBTQIA+, including 22% of Latinx Millennials.⁵

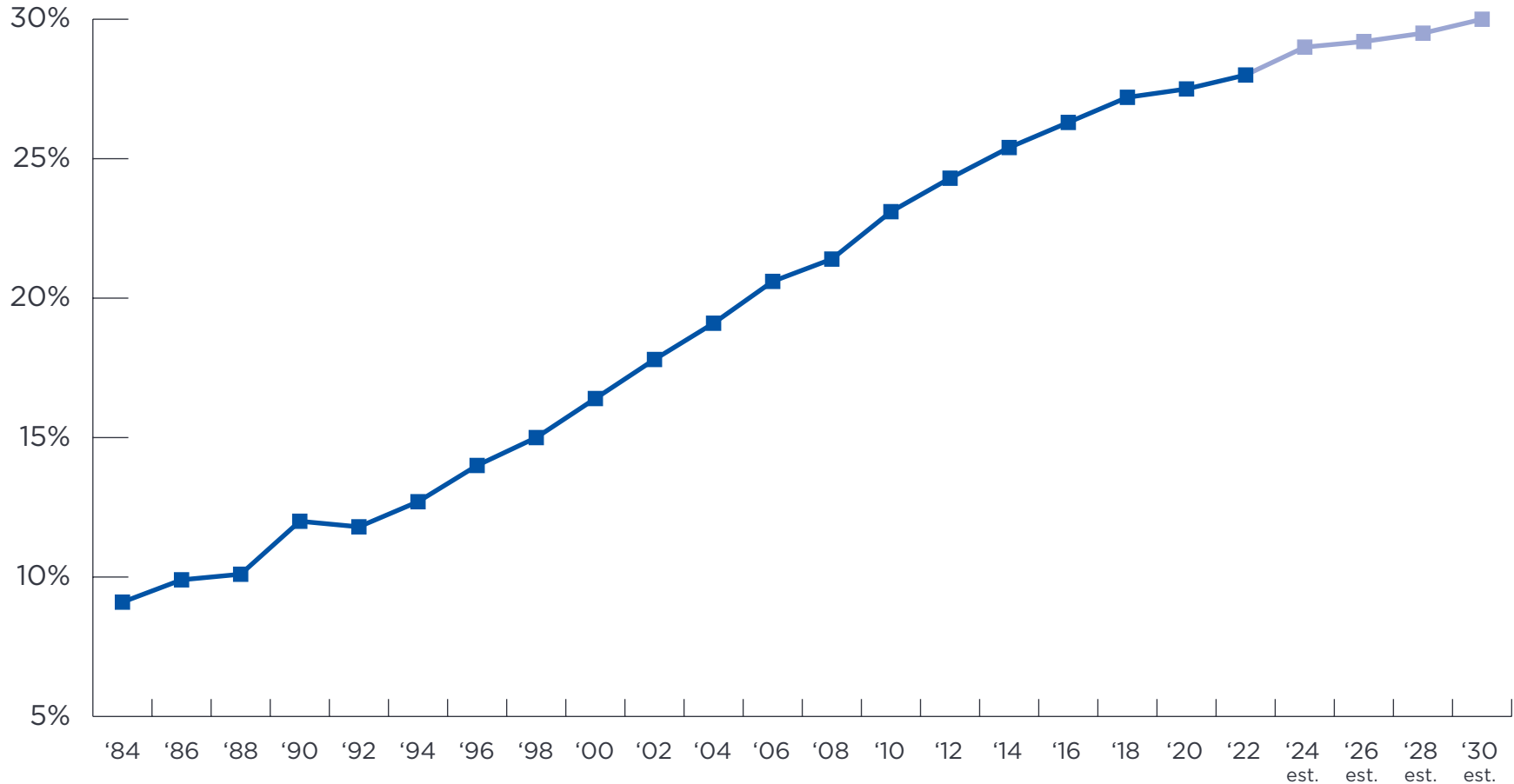
In an increasingly diverse country, these differences are strengths. Business leaders frequently rate the ability to form relationships and collaborate with diverse teams as a top skill for the workplace.⁶ With the ability to navigate across and between cultural and linguistic differences, Latino students bring a multitude of talents and assets that make our schools—and our country—stronger.

a The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race. This document may also refer to this population as “Latinx” to represent the diversity of gender identities and expressions that are present in the community.



Latino Student Population Growth

Percentage of Latino students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools



SOURCE: Maria Fisher, et al, "Latino Education: Status and Prospects. The State of Hispanic America 1998," National Council of La Raza, October 1998, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED427129.pdf> (accessed June 2, 2022); National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics: Table 203.50," U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, 2021, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_203.50.asp?current=yes (accessed June 2, 2022).

English Learners Are a Valuable Part of the American Education System

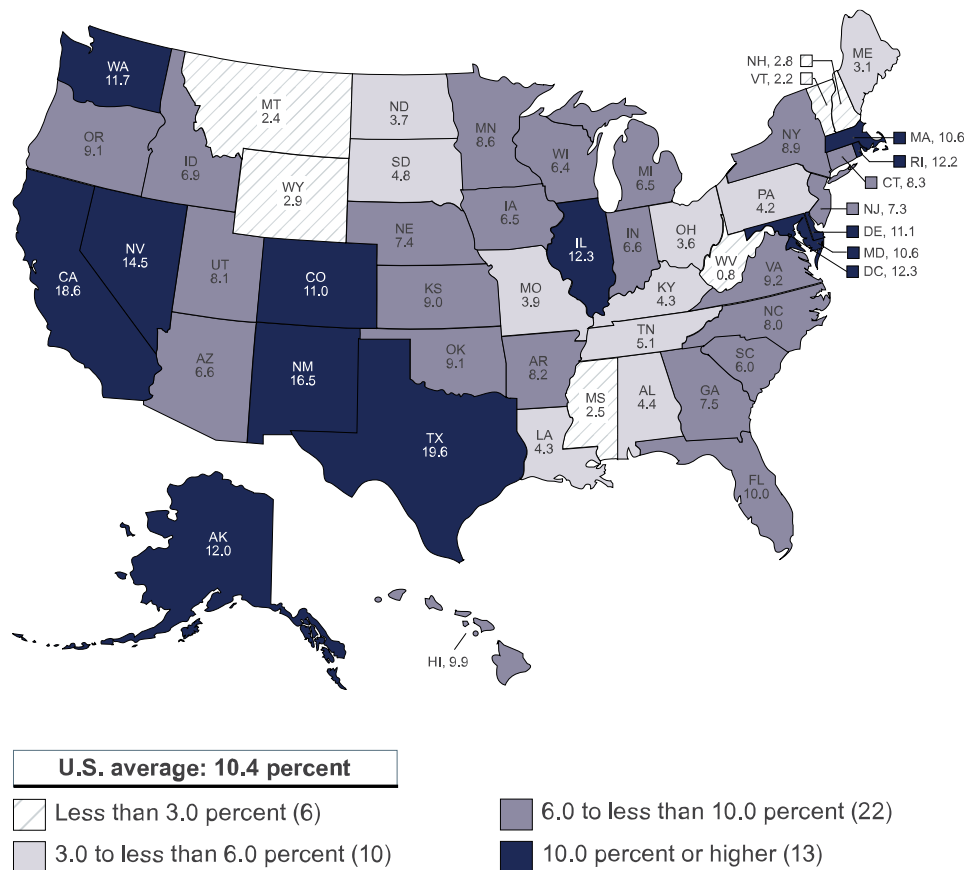
While not all English learners (ELs) are Latino, more than three quarters of the total EL population in the U.S.—5.1 million students—are Latino, and a similar proportion speak Spanish at home.⁷

Since 2000, the number of both Latino and non-Latino ELs has increased by more than one million students.⁸ As the population of ELs has grown, the need for well-qualified teachers and effective instructional practices that support English proficiency has become even more urgent. Today, 12 states have English learner populations that exceed 10% of the total student population.⁹ Yet students' native language skills are often viewed as an obstacle to overcome in attaining English proficiency.

Multilingualism should be recognized and celebrated as an asset that helps all students, rather than a limitation. Indeed, research has shown that ELs who achieve proficiency on English reading tests by 8th grade fare as well as their non-EL peers and even outperform non-ELs on math tests, attendance, and course grades.¹⁰

English Learners Around the Country

Percentage of ELs enrolled in public schools by state



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, "English Learners in Public Schools," U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, May 2022, <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf> (accessed June 10, 2022).

Latino Students Made Significant Progress in the Past 30 Years

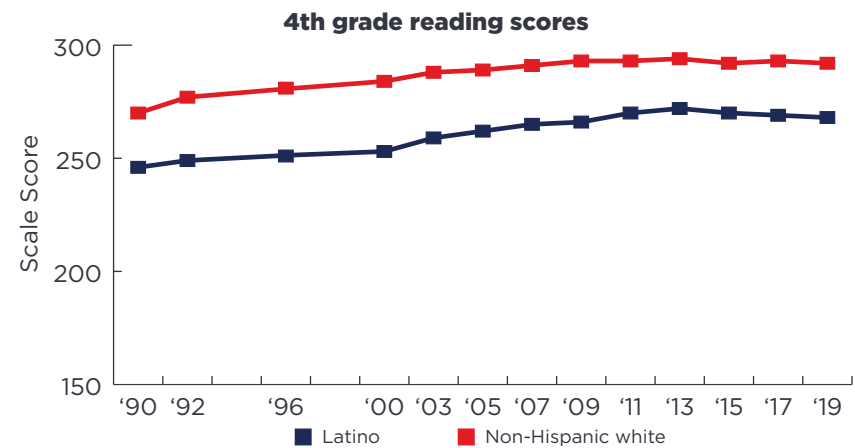
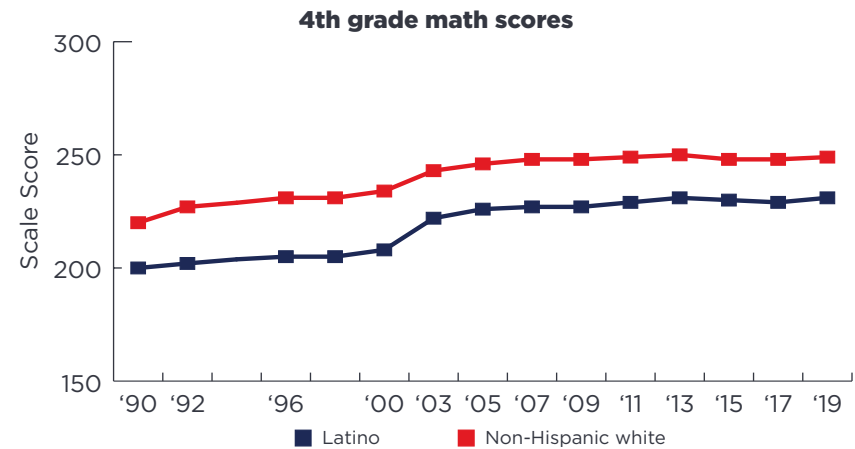
Latino students have made notable gains in educational achievement over the past few decades. In 2019, Latino 4th and 8th grade students scored higher in math and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) than Latino students did in 1992. In addition, the gaps between Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students at these grade levels have narrowed slightly.¹¹

In addition, the on-time high school graduation rate¹² for Latino students increased from 71% in the 2010-11 school year to nearly 82% in the 2018-19 school year, and the gap between Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students narrowed.¹³ As more students graduated high school on-time, the number of Hispanic students enrolled in postsecondary programs also increased from 782,400 in 1990 to nearly 3.8 million in 2019—an impressive 384% increase.¹⁴



Progress Closing the Opportunity Gap

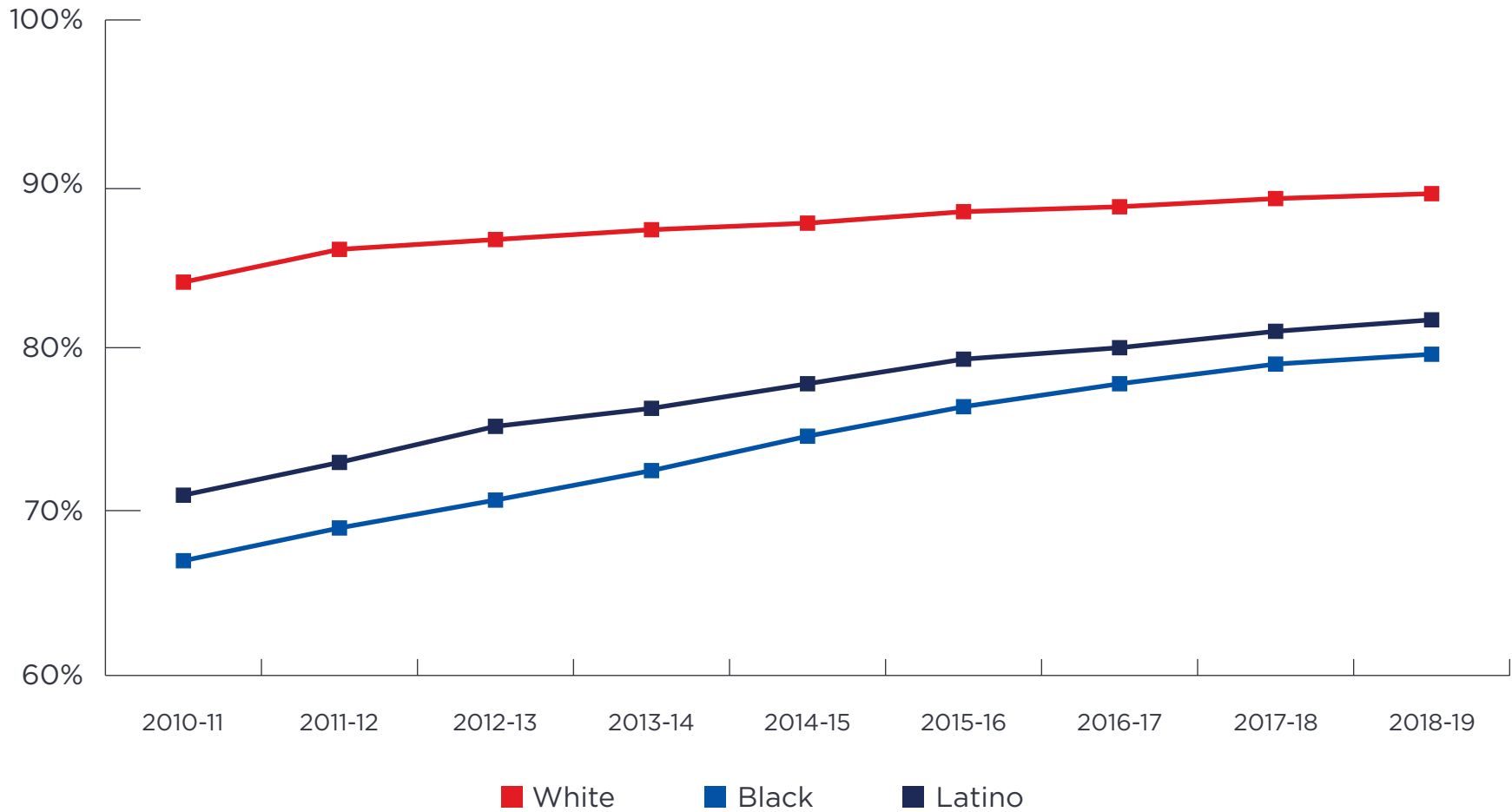
Comparing Latino student NAEP scores with their non-Hispanic white peers



SOURCE: Source: The Nation's Report Card, "Achievement Gaps Dashboard," U.S. Department of Education, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/dashboards/achievement_gaps.aspx (accessed June 14, 2022).

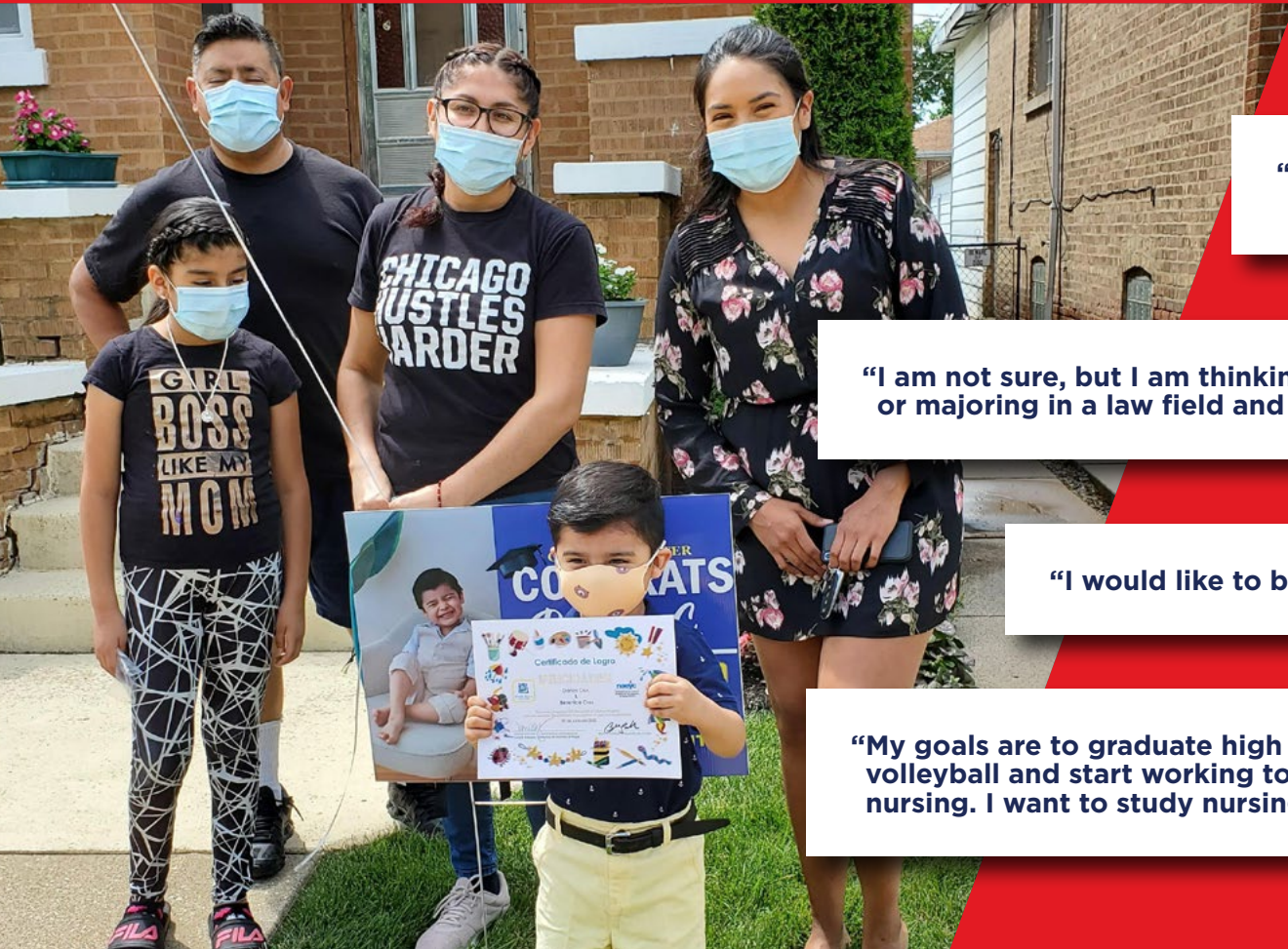
Latino High School Graduation Rates Increased Steadily

Percentage of students graduating high school in four years



SOURCE: Building a Grad Nation," Civic and Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University, October 6, 2021, <https://gradnation.americaspromise.org/report/2021-building-grad-nation-report#part-i-high-school-graduation-trends> (Accessed June 14, 2022).

Latino Students and Their Families Have High Aspirations for the Future



“Attend a military academy. And then become a United States Air Force fighter pilot.”

“I am not sure, but I am thinking about either majoring in business or majoring in a law field and then get[ing] a job in social justice.”

“I would like to be a human rights lawyer.”

“My goals are to graduate high school hopefully with a scholarship in volleyball and start working towards getting my license. I want to do nursing. I want to study nursing to become neonatal nurse.”¹⁵

Latino Students and Their Families Have High Aspirations for the Future

These are just a small sample of the goals Latino students have for their future. UnidosUS has worked to elevate the voices and lived experiences of Latino students and parents. Their commitment to education and hopes for a brighter future dispel negative stereotypes and expose the systemic failures of public policies that cause educational inequities to persist.

For example, in surveys and focus groups, Latino parents express high hopes for their children and make it clear that their children's education is their priority.¹⁶ A recent survey found that 87% of Latino parents felt it was essential or very important for their child to go to college, 15 percentage points higher than non-Latino white parents.¹⁷

Far from being disengaged, Latino parents, more than any other demographic, strongly agree (58%) that family engagement from schools is essential to their student's success.¹⁸ In focus groups with Latino parents during the pandemic, participants frequently expressed the theme that "My children are my focus and their education my priority."¹⁹

In another set of focus groups, a student shared how committed their parents are to their education: "My parents are like very supportive... And it's funny, but like they really didn't graduate—they only went to elementary because we were really poor back

then. We still are right now, but we're better. But like they're always asking me about like, 'Hey, what are you doing with school? Do you want me to talk to your teacher? Do you want me to go to the office?' When it's school-related, my parents, all they want for me to do is like have a career, have a life, have a better life than they did."²⁰



The Impact of the Pandemic



Impact of the Pandemic

The pandemic disrupted education across the country as schools closed and classrooms switched to remote learning. While all children were impacted, there is evidence that students of color and low-income students faced the biggest challenges—from lack of internet access to longer school closures and less instructional time.

In focus groups conducted by UnidosUS in 2021, Latino parents described the stress caused by learning online. Parents described their children, particularly adolescent children, as being distracted, disengaged, and longing for social interaction. They also displayed resourcefulness and resilience. One participant noted: “Tenemos dos opciones: adaptarse o adaptarse” (“We have two options: adapting or adapting”). Families identified opportunities, such as an increase in quality family time, the strengthening of family bonds, greater use of Spanish language in the home, socioemotional growth in their children, and empathy for them and their teachers as they learned to adapt to virtual learning.²¹

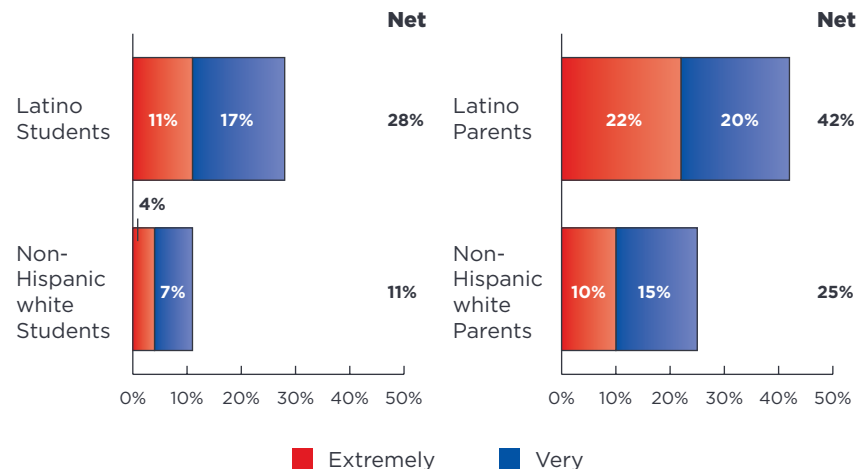
In a 2021 survey, more than 70% of Latino parents reported that their children experienced a learning challenge during the pandemic, and many expressed worries about their ability to support their children in overcoming learning struggles. Nearly half (48%) said they do not have people they can talk to in their community about their child’s learning and thinking

differences, and the same percentage said they do not know how to start conversations with educators about learning challenges their child has experienced.²²

Today, Latino teens and parents are more likely to be concerned than other Americans about the academic impacts of the pandemic. Among Hispanic parents, 42% are extremely or very concerned about their children falling behind in school.²³

Students and Parents Worry About Falling Behind Due to COVID-19

Percentage of students and parents who said they are worried



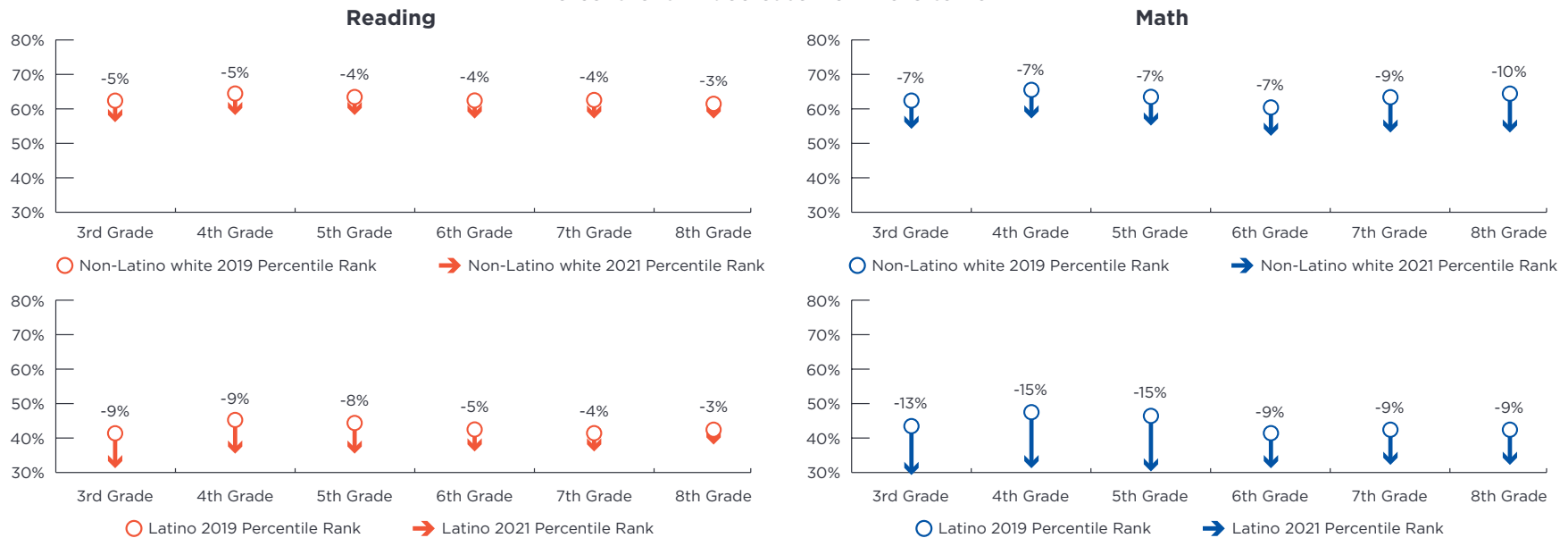
SOURCE: Monica Anderson, Michelle Faverio, and Colleen McClain, “How Teens Navigate School During COVID-19,” Pew Research Center, June 2, 2022. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/06/02/how-teens-navigate-school-during-covid-19/> (accessed June 9, 2022).

The Pandemic Threatens Latino Educational Progress

For Latino students, the pandemic arrived as many educational indicators were trending in a positive direction. While performance on math and reading assessments declined among all student groups during the pandemic, Latino students in 3rd through 8th grade saw greater declines than their non-Latino white peers on NWEA's Measures of Academic Progress, an interim assessment administered in schools across the country.²⁴

Pandemic Effects on Student Academic Performance

Percentile rank decrease from 2019 to 2021



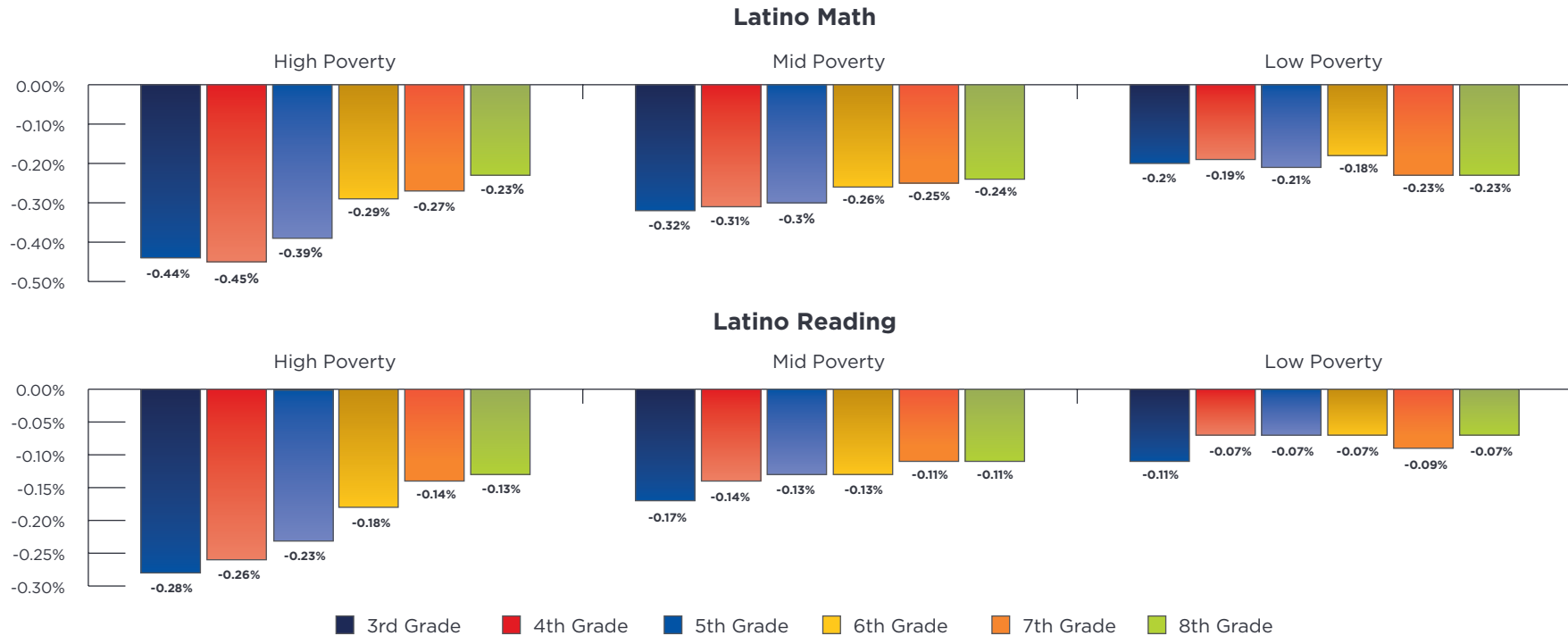
SOURCE: Karyn Lewis and Megan Kuhfeld, "Learning during COVID-19: An update on student achievement and growth at the start of the 2021-22 school year," NWEA, December 2021, <https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2021/12/Learning-during-COVID19-An-update-on-student-achievement-and-growth-at-the-start-of-the-2021-2022-school-year-Research-Brief.pdf> (accessed June 9, 2022).

It is important to note, however, that lower than expected performance for Latino students can largely be attributed to the mode of instruction. Latino students were more likely to attend high-poverty schools that participated in remote learning longer, and these schools experienced the largest declines in achievement growth. Researchers estimate that students attending high-poverty schools that provided primarily remote learning in the 2020-21 school year lost the equivalent of roughly half a year of growth in math and reading.²⁵

The Pandemic Threatens Latino Educational Progress

High Poverty Schools Experienced Larger Declines in Academic Growth

Declines in Latino academic growth by school district poverty level



SOURCE: Goldhaber, et al, "A Comprehensive Picture of Achievement Across the COVID-19 Pandemic Years: Examining Variation in Test Levels and Growth Across Districts, Schools, Grades, and Students," National Center For Analysis Of Longitudinal Data In Education Research, May 2022, https://caldercenter.org/sites/default/files/CALDER%20Working%20Paper%20266-0522_0.pdf (accessed June 22, 2022).

Because participation rates in statewide assessments were significantly lower in the 2020-21 school year—for example, only 24% of eligible students participated in California’s annual statewide tests in the 2020-21 school year, compared to 95% in years past²⁶—it is difficult to accurately determine impacts on student learning at the state level. While opportunity gaps between Latino and non-Latino white students did not appear to widen in states like Florida, more data is required to understand the true scope of unfinished learning among Latino students.²⁷

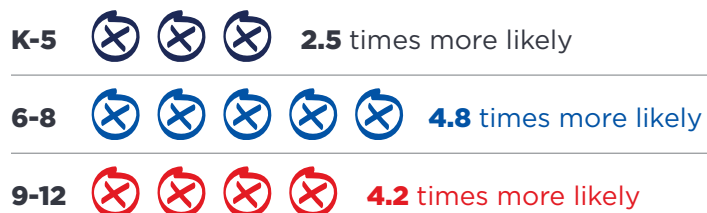
English Learners Face Greater Challenges

For English learners (ELs), the transition to remote instruction was especially challenging due to several intersecting factors. The majority of ELs come from low-income families in which parents have limited levels of education. ELs are also more likely to be unhoused than the general student population and less likely to have high-speed internet access.²⁸

In the 2020-21 school year, teachers with more than 20% EL students reported significant challenges. A survey of teachers by the Government Accountability Office found that “English learners struggled with understanding lessons and completing assignments, having an appropriate workspace, accessing school meals, and getting assistance at their workspace.”²⁹

Estimated Likelihood That Teachers with English Learners Had More Students Who Were Regularly Behind Academically

Teachers in a Virtual Environment with English Learners Compared to All Other Teachers in Their Grade-level Band, 2020-21 School Year



SOURCE: “Teachers Reported Many Obstacles for High-Poverty Students and English Learners As Well As Some Mitigating Strategies,” United States Government Accountability Office, May 2022, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105815.pdf> (accessed June 17, 2022).

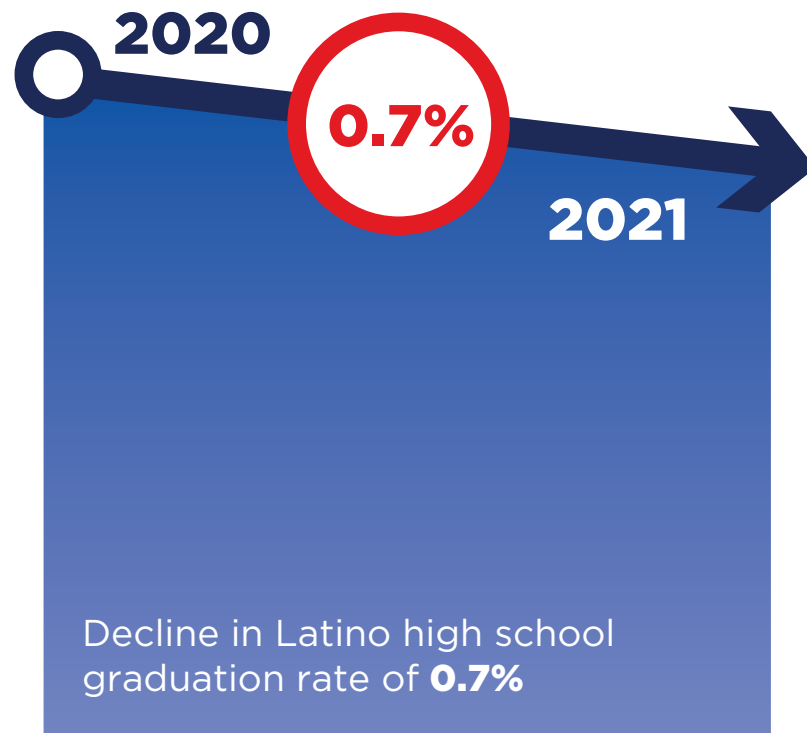
As a result, the disruption in learning caused by the pandemic likely had an outsized impact on English learners. Research shows that ELs typically make academic gains at rates similar to or higher than their peers, but they experience greater learning loss while out of school during the summer.³⁰ When schools closed during the pandemic, many ELs lost access to critical resources and lacked technology to connect with their teachers and classmates, mimicking and magnifying the effects of summer school closures.³⁷

States are just beginning to understand the impact of the pandemic on ELs as annual testing resumes. In Texas, the state with the greatest proportion of ELs, preliminary end-of-year assessment data for ELs taking a Spanish-language reading assessment indicates those students did not meet grade level standards at roughly 1.5 times that of their peers taking an English-language reading assessment.³²



Warning Signs for High School Graduation and College Enrollment

After steady increases over the past decade, the Latino high school graduation rate declined slightly in the 2020-21 school year, according to an analysis of data from 25 states representing 57% of the student population.³³ The drop was part of a broader trend that impacted all student subgroups, including English learners.



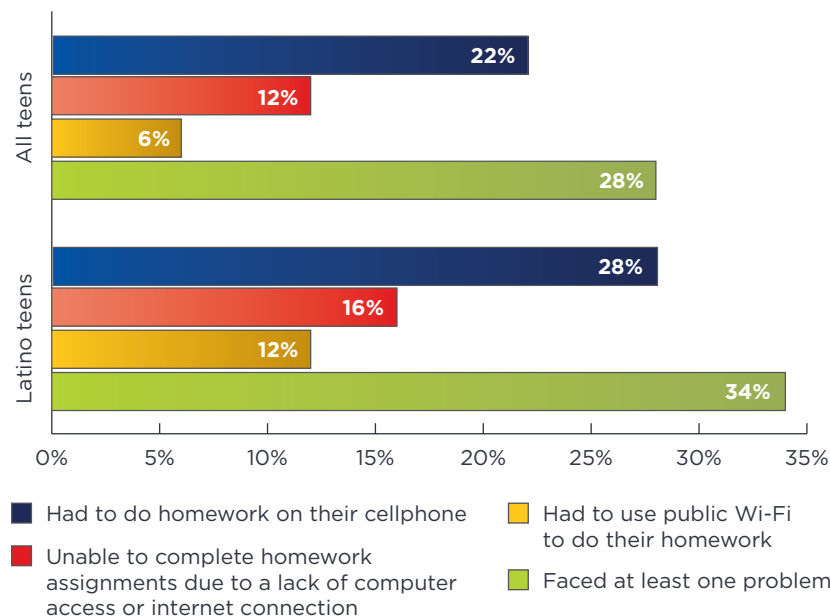
At the postsecondary level, Latino freshman enrollment declined 7.8% in spring 2021, compared to spring 2020—the first decline in Latino enrollment in a decade. Some ground was regained when freshman enrollment rebounded by 4% by the spring 2022 semester (although it remained below the pre-pandemic level). Overall, postsecondary enrollment is down more than 9% since the start of the pandemic—with nearly 1.4 million fewer undergraduates.³⁴

Despite Improvements, the Homework Gap Persists

The pandemic magnified the impact of disparities in connectivity and device availability for Latino students. Data collected in 2018 showed that 31% of Latino households lacked high speed broadband and 17% did not have a computer—making access to remote instruction incredibly challenging.³⁵

Challenges Faced by Latino Students During Remote Learning

Percentage of all teens encountering problems versus Latino



SOURCE: Monica Anderson, Michelle Faverio, and Colleen McClain, “How Teens Navigate School During COVID-19,” Pew Research Center, June 2, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/06/02/how-teens-navigate-school-during-covid-19/> (accessed June 9, 2022).

Since March 2020, school districts dramatically expanded one-to-one computing initiatives and support for home internet access,³⁶ but the homework gap remains. Two years after the start of the pandemic, one in three Latino students often or sometimes encountered at least one of the following challenges while learning: having to do homework on a cellphone, being unable to complete homework assignments due to a lack of computer access or internet connect, or having to use public Wi-Fi to do their homework.³⁷

Students aren’t the only ones who struggled, as 50% of Latino parents reported having difficulty helping their kids with unfamiliar material, and 58% had problems communicating with teachers.³⁸ To address this, UnidosUS developed the Padres Comprometidos Ed-Tech curriculum to train parents in digital literacy and provide them with additional tools to support their children’s education.³⁹



Access to Well-Funded Schools and Diverse Teachers Remains Unequal

While the pandemic shined a spotlight on student achievement and access to technology, other disparities were less visible during the past two years. Long-standing inequities in school funding and access to well-qualified and experienced teachers who reflect the diversity of the communities they serve continue to act as barriers to Latino educational achievement.

School districts with large populations of students of color receive significantly less funding than districts that serve predominantly non-Hispanic white students both in absolute terms and based on student needs. According to a 2019 study, non-white districts receive more than \$2,200 per student less than predominantly white districts.⁴⁰ Another study found that majority Latino school districts have an average per pupil funding gap—the difference between current spending and what it would cost for students to achieve national average outcomes on reading and math assessments—of \$8,000 per student, compared to districts with minority Latino student populations.⁴¹

Latino students are more likely to attend a low-rated school than their non-Latino white peers, according to an examination of 10 states.⁴² They are also less likely to have access to Latino teachers, which research shows can boost student achievement and engagement. Despite the fact that Latinos comprise 28% of the student population, just 9% of teachers are Latino and only 24% of Teacher Preparation Programs (TPP) train elementary teacher candidates to support ELs.⁴³ According to The Education Trust, in 27 states, about one in 10 Latino students attend a school without a single Latino teacher.⁴⁴ Latino students are also more likely to have novice teachers in more than half of all states.⁴⁵

Latinos comprise **28%** of K-12 students, but only **9%** of teachers.

A Path Toward a Stronger Education System



A Path Toward a Stronger Education System

UnidosUS has long advocated for targeted investments and policies that support the success of Latino students. For example, research shows that English learners perform better when they have access to qualified teachers, high-quality learning materials, and schools with adequate levels of financial resources. Yet these investments will also strengthen our schools for all students. As we emerge from the shadow of the pandemic, our goal should be to create educational experiences that build on each student's unique strengths and allow them to achieve their full potential. We are calling for investments and policies that will advance this goal:

- **Actionable data and student-centered accountability**

- Provide objective, comparable data to measure student academic proficiency and provide a roadmap to target funding, supports, and interventions where needed most.
- Honor the equity guardrails in federal law and ensure compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) framework for identifying and supporting low-performing schools.
- Engage the civil rights community in shaping the future of assessments and accountability to meaningfully and positively impact the conditions under which our youth are supported in their learning and development.
- Center the voices of young people, their families and communities, particularly those from historically excluded groups to shed light on their experiences, knowledge, and visions they have for a system of assessment and accountability that will improve educational experiences and outcomes for our youth.

- **Equitable funding to support low-income students**

- Triple funding for Title I, Part A, and ensure that Title I funds are targeted toward the highest poverty school districts.
- Ensure that federal funds provided by the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund—which provides school districts with emergency funds to address the impact of COVID-19 on schools—reaches the students who need the most support in pandemic recovery.

A Path Toward a Stronger Education System

- **A new approach to multilingual learners that builds on their assets**
 - Make a bold and historical investment in Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—the federal formula grant program intended to support English learners (ELs) in every state and territory, by increasing funding to \$2 billion (from \$831 million in FY22) to keep up with the growth in the EL population. Since 2001, the population of English learners has increased by 35%.⁴⁶ However, Title III funding has not kept pace. When adjusted for inflation, funding has decreased by 24% since 2002.⁴⁷
 - Invest in asset-based instructional approaches, including dual-language instruction, that support ELs’ language development in both English and Spanish and fosters strong academic outcomes. States and districts could also use increased funding to develop and adopt native language assessments to leverage the full repertoire of linguistic, cultural, and cognitive resources that ELs bring to school and to better inform equitable and higher-level instruction; they can implement professional development for teachers of ELs; and conduct supplemental culturally and linguistically responsive engagement with EL families.



A Path Toward a Stronger Education System

- **Inclusive, responsive, and welcoming schools for all students**

- Invest in mental health to fund counselors, social workers, and mental health professionals in our schools.
- Uphold and protect the constitutional rights of students to a free public education regardless of the citizenship or the immigration status of students and/or their parents, established in Plyler v. Doe.
- Support the full inclusion of transgender and all LGBTQIA+ youth by funding professional development for staff to incorporate inclusive school policies, enforce existing Title IX and sex discrimination laws, and include sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Address the harmful consequences of exclusionary discipline policies that disproportionately impact students of color, students with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ youth.
- Invest in Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grants (Title II of the Higher Education Act) that incentivize partnerships between K-12 and higher education, which articulate a pathway for prospective teachers of color and support them along the way.

- **Support for learning anytime, anywhere**

- Sustain funding for schools to continue to provide devices and connectivity to students beyond emergency programs established during the pandemic.
- Support family digital literacy efforts in partnership with community-based organizations.
- Invest in continued professional development for educators on digital instruction, particularly in providing tools and resources for instructing English learners.

- **Authentic engagement with students and families**

- Ensure information about federal, state, and local education policies impacting their children reaches all families. The information must:
 - » Be in families' home languages and conveyed in a manner that is culturally relevant and easy to understand.

A Path Toward a Stronger Education System

- » Help families better understand, support, and continue to advocate for their children's education, including identification and placement process, services and assessment information, exit requirements, and monitoring.
- Create a responsive infrastructure for positive, active, and ongoing relations and two-way communication with students' families and the community (e.g., designate family liaisons).
 - » Engage families as strategic partners in their children's education.
 - » Establish an advisory structure for input from family and community members.
 - » Welcome and accommodate varying forms of family support, taking into consideration talents and schedules of various family members.
 - » Capitalize on the varied linguistic and cultural resources in the community.
- Communicate with families and students about partnerships with community-based organizations (e.g., UnidosUS affiliates) and refer them to additional resources in the community.
 - » Build on new models of collaborative, wraparound services to continue what is working.



A Path Toward a Stronger Education System



- **Keeping students on track for postsecondary education**

- Increase investments in programs, such as Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) (\$1.3 billion), GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) (\$408 million), HEP (High School Equivalency Program), and CAMP (College Assistance Migrant Program) (\$66 million), which provide mentoring and guidance for underserved students. A portion of program funds should be used to cover small-dollar financial emergencies for current and previously enrolled participants. For students who are financially vulnerable, a relatively small expense can force difficult decisions concerning staying enrolled in and completing college.
- Double the maximum federal Pell Grant which will support low-income students in covering the cost of college. Doubling the Pell Grant would restore the purchasing power to half the cost of college for a bachelor's degree at an in-state, public institution.
- Increase investments for the Retention and Completion Grants. Supporting students' persistence and completion is critical to expanding access and affordability to higher education. Congress can ensure that colleges have the resources to provide evidence-based academic and culturally relevant services, such as direct support services, career coaching and networking opportunities, and career pathways, through programs that serve and assist individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, including Latinos as well as first-generation college students and students impacted by poverty.

Conclusion



Conclusion

The educational progress made by Latino students over the past two decades deserves to be celebrated. It is the result of a strong belief among Latino families in education as the path to economic advancement, combined with the talents and boundless ambitions of students themselves. And in no small part, it can be attributed to the work of advocates, communities, and educators who pushed to expose and dismantle the inequities that prevent Latino students from achieving their full potential.

The course of the next two decades will be determined by the decisions we make today. As the number of Latino students grows, will we create schools that nurture their strengths and meet their needs? Do we double down on what works—like equitable funding, targeted support for English learners, and inclusive schools—or do we accept the status quo and setbacks caused by the pandemic as irreversible? And will we recognize that today’s Latino students must be our priority because they will shape our nation for generations to come?

If enacted, the agenda outlined in this report would support students highly impacted by the pandemic and address the root causes of long-standing opportunity gaps. It would create the conditions for continued progress by Latinos, and it would strengthen our education system for all students. Latino young people are counting on us to invest in their future. The choice is ours to make.



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