

Dear State and District Education Leaders,

The COVID-19 pandemic will have long-lasting negative impacts on an entire generation of Latino students, who will soon make up one third of our student population, unless their needs are prioritized in your COVID-19 recovery plans. Even before the pandemic, Latino students were grossly underserved by our education system. But during the pandemic, we witnessed the exacerbation and widening of longstanding equity gaps as schools failed to keep Latino students engaged, failed to address the digital divide which locked so many students out of online learning, and failed to offer alternatives to online learning for students that needed other options.

This is a critical moment for Latino students, and the decisions you make will have decisive consequences on what our education system looks like for these students for years to come. The disruption to the status quo, as painful as it is, coupled with an unprecedented infusion of federal support, finally gives us an opportunity to address the systemic inequities that are pervasive in our schools. As you help rebuild our education system, we urge you to center the needs of students who have been impacted the most by the pandemic, including Latino students and English Language Learners. A failure to do so will reverse the progress that has been made thus far on education equity.

As organizations that work to empower the Latino community, hold policy and decision-makers accountable to our community, and care deeply about the future of Latino students, we write to urge you to prioritize Latino students in your recovery plans.

We know it's tempting to rush back to normal, but this pandemic has shown us that the status quo is not working for Latino students and simply replicating the status quo is not in our community's best interest. Instead, we recommend that you consider the following actions as you develop your recovery plans:

- Make affirmative efforts to engage Latino parents. Ultimately, they know what their students need to be successful. And this pandemic has shown just how critical relationships between schools and parents are to foster success. Plans that do not include the voice of Latino parents will fall short in truly addressing the needs of Latino students.
- Listen to educators, especially Latino educators. Educators are the frontline of our education system, they interact with students and also see what is working and what is not. Engage them in the development of your recovery plans.
- Use this as a time to innovate. Resources must be targeted to meet the academic, linguistic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Identify barriers facing Latino students and consider and invest in research-based approaches to breaking down those barriers and improving learning opportunities for Latino students, including the following:

- Invest in recruiting and retaining Latino educators. The teaching core as presently constituted does not represent our students. While the Latino student population has grown, the growth of Latino educators has not kept pace. This is alarming since we know that students learn and do best when they see themselves reflected in the teachers who guide them and can relate to their lived experience.
- Close longstanding equity gaps, starting with the digital divide. Even as students return to in-person learning, the value and power of having tech devices and reliable broadband in the home will continue. We cannot afford to have students fall further behind because of the digital divide.
- Invest in support services for Latino students, especially mental health services. Too many Latino students lost loved ones during the pandemic, experienced housing and financial insecurity and that trauma will follow them into the classroom. Ensuring that they receive the adequate and culturally appropriate support they need to heal will help them succeed in school in the long run.
- Invest in early college and other programs that prepare Latinos to thrive in postsecondary education. Already, we are seeing that Latino enrollment in college is being impacted by the pandemic and we must ensure that they continue to feel prepared and encouraged to pursue and finish college programs.
- Invest in universal pre-k to ensure Latino students enter kindergarten ready to succeed.
- Provide research-based approaches to tutoring and summer enrichment activities to accelerate learning, use students' native language as an asset to build upon and progress toward English language proficiency, and redress unfinished learning Latino students face as a result of the pandemic.

We will continue to monitor how state and district leaders respond to this pandemic and how they prioritize Latino students in their recovery plans. We hope we can count on you to do right by the fastest-growing student population, and our future workforce by prioritizing them in recovery efforts.

Sincerely,

Organizations

1. ALL In Education
2. Hispanic Technology and Telecommunications Partnership (HTTP)
3. Hyde Square Task Force
4. Latino Community Foundation
5. Latinos for Education
6. Margarita Muniz Academy
7. National Parents Union

8. Oakland Public Education Fund
9. OneGoal Massachusetts
10. Santa Barbara Unified School District
11. Ser Colombia
12. Suffolk County Office of Minority Affairs
13. UnidosUS
14. United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
15. We Are All Human Foundation

Individuals

1. Isabel Acosta, Los Angeles, CA
2. Martha Alba-Gonzalez, Long Beach, CA
3. Jonathan Alcantar, Greeley, CO
4. Priscilla Aquino Garza, Austin, TX
5. Luz Baez-Tackett, San Diego, CA
6. Karina Baum, Cambridge, MA
7. Bryant Best, Antioch, TN
8. Daniela Blanchet, Orlando, FL
9. Paul Bloomberg, Palm Springs, CA
10. Erin Brooks, Chicago, IL
11. Shirley Cardona, Boston, MA
12. Yolanda Castro, San Diego, CA
13. Marcela DeFaria, Austin, TX
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23. Roberto Licon, Long Beach, CA
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26. Elvi Lopez Valenzuela, Long Beach, CA
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32. Claudia Orduna, Missouri City, TX
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40. Amanda Seider, Boston, MA
41. Cecilia Soriano, Jamaica Plain, MA
42. Lauren Treacy, Seattle, WA
43. Roberto Trevino, Houston, TX
44. Raul Ripoll Vera, Cambridge, MA
45. Priscilla Zarate, Deer Park, NY