

The Emerging Majority

The Emerging Majority: The Growth of the Latino Population and Latino Student Enrollments

Albert Cortez, Ph.D.,

As the 1950s baby boomers age, their children's children are entering their prime childbearing years. And the echo effect can be seen as school enrollments around the country expand.

In addition, there are notable changes in the demographic profiles of school-age children. In more and more states around the country, Latino students are reflecting the fastest growth of any student sub-group, often accounting for a substantial proportion of enrollment increases.

This growing national trend has serious implications for many aspects of public school education. States that are slow to recognize these do so at their students' peril.
Expanding Latino Presence in the United States

According to the most recent census, the United States has experienced significant growth in population during the preceding decade. According to a summary compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau, between 1990 and 2000, the population grew from 248,709,873 to 281,421,906, an increase of 13.2 percent (Murdock, 2002).

Much of the overall increase (49.6 percent) is attributed to natural causes (total births and deaths during the period analyzed). The remaining 50.3 percent of the growth is attributable to net immigration (new immigrants minus departures).

Most noteworthy in the observed trend data is the increase in the number and percentages of Latino student populations in many states. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the nation's Hispanic population has grown by 60 percent since 1990, a growth rate that exceeded the growth levels of all other U.S. populations.

Though the great majority of the country's Hispanic population is concentrated in a handful of the more highly populated states (California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Arizona, and New Mexico), many other states are also experiencing significant growth. Recent census data reflect that among the states with the greatest percentage increases in Latino population were:

- North Carolina, 394 percent;
- Arkansas, 337 percent;
- Georgia, 300 percent;
- Tennessee, 278 percent;
- Nevada, 217 percent;
- South Carolina, 211 percent;
- Alabama, 208 percent;
- Kentucky, 173 percent;
- Minnesota, 166 percent; and
- Nebraska, 155 percent.

In contrast to other groups, census data have long shown that the U.S. Latino population is a younger population and, as

a result, includes larger numbers of individuals of childbearing ages.

Of the total Hispanic population, over 35 percent are under the age of 18, in contrast to the non-Hispanic population where only 25 percent are 18 or younger. Coupled with traditionally larger families, these factors and increasing in-migration of Latino families have contributed to an increasing Latino presence in the nation.

Growth in Latino Student Enrollment

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, overall student enrollments grew from 38,125,000 in 1989-90 to 47,356,000 in 1999-00, a net increase of 9,231,000 pupils over a 10-year period (2000). This 9 million student increase translated into a 24.2 percent increase over a single decade, creating significant pressure for more support to supply additional teachers and facilities to serve this population.

While student enrollments grew in most states, the greatest net increases were concentrated in some of the larger industrial states (California, Texas, Florida) and a few southwestern states, all areas experiencing significant growth in the Latino student population.

According to a report compiled by the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the National Center for Education Statistics report that Hispanic student enrollment in U.S. schools has doubled over the last decade. More than 9 million Hispanic children are of school age. One in every six children enrolled in public schools is of Hispanic origin. By the year 2025, one in every four children will be of Hispanic origin (U.S. Senate, Congressional Hispanic Caucus, 2002).

The box below presents a state-by-state summary of Hispanic school-age population reflecting 1990 and 2000 data and the percentage of increases within each state. Evident from this summary is the fact that Hispanic education and related issues are no longer limited to a handful of states.

Though California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois and Arizona continue to have the greatest numbers of Latino students, other states have had the greatest proportional increases. In fact, 18 states had increases of over 100 percent in the last decade, including such historically unlikely candidates as North Carolina (397 percent), Arkansas (309 percent), South Carolina (189 percent), and Iowa (141 percent). Though the numbers in these emerging migration sites are smaller, the high proportional increases pose new challenges for these areas.

Texas has experienced both an overall growth in the population and a much faster increase in the Latino population. Texas's population grew from 16.9 million in 1990 to 20.8 million in 2000, a net increase of 22.9 percent. According to Dr. Steve Murdock, et al., Latinos account for a significant proportion of the increase in the state's population, representing 60 percent of the net population change (2002). The majority of that number includes persons who are under the age of 18.

Growing Numbers of Limited English Proficient Pupils

A significant subset of the new Latino student enrollment includes students who are identified as limited-English-proficient (LEP, also referred to as English language learners in the education literature). According to the National Clearinghouse on English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Education Programs (previously known as the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education), since 1989-90 the number of students identified as LEP has grown from 2,154,781 to 4,416,580, a net increase of 104 percent over the 10-year span. In contrast, the overall enrollment has increased by only 24.2 percent.

Broader Distribution of LEP Students

Review of the data compiled by the clearinghouse reveals that the largest numerical increases in LEP students occurred in the larger states that historically have had larger concentrations of language-minority populations: California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois. According to state-level data compiled by NCELA, the five states accounted for

1,194,543, or 51.3 percent, of the LEP student increases reported in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. California alone accounted for 1,480,527 LEP pupils and Texas for another 570,603 pupils.

Furthermore, there is evidence of an emerging greater national dispersion of the Latino and LEP population. As part of its analysis, the NCELA compiled data on the increase in the proportion of LEP pupils that constituted state school populations. Surprising to many is that many states that have historically enrolled very few language-minority pupils are experiencing explosive growth in these student populations.

Many southeastern and midwestern states report the greatest proportional increases in LEP enrollments in the country. According to state-level reports, states such as Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Indiana experienced more than 200 percent increases in LEP enrollments over the last decade. Oklahoma, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota in the Midwest joined these states. In addition to these regions, the states of Nevada, Oregon, and Idaho also reported LEP increases over 200 percent in the span between 1989-90 and 1999-00. The state of New Hampshire reflected the greatest proportional increase in LEP enrollments.

While the above mentioned states had the greatest proportional increases in LEP enrollments, NCELA data also indicate that a number of additional states have had LEP increases over 100 percent. This 100 percent to 200 percent growth range included the states of Arizona, Colorado, Washington, in the West and Iowa in the Midwest, and Vermont in the East.

Need for Significant School Adjustments

Though some of the percentage growth is attributable to the relatively smaller numbers of LEP students found in some of these states, the data nonetheless reflect that more and more states will be dealing with challenges of educating growing numbers of language-minority pupils.

The increasing presence of such students in these states no doubt has created a need for ongoing state attention to language-related issues, including maintaining specialized instructional support programs that ensure equitable student access to comprehensible instruction required under the *Lau vs. Nichols* U.S. Supreme Court decision.

Related issues involve the need for training greater numbers of bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) teachers.

Though simply accommodating the larger number of school-age individuals presents challenges for educators, the issue is far more complex than simply accommodating greater numbers. Educators and community leaders must also recognize that a more diverse student enrollment has implications for instruction, teacher preparation, assessment and school accountability. Additionally, schools will need to re-assess existing parent and community engagement strategies to make them more responsive to parents and communities who may speak a different language and who may be grounded in a distinct cultural context. Schools who are slow or reluctant to adapt invite increasing failure.

Those dealing with this new Latino geographic dispersion may want to confer with educators based in states with a longer history of serving English language learners, including not only kindergarten through 12th grade educators and higher education staff, but also organizations such as the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) who have long supported school efforts to recognize and capitalize on the strengths of the Latino community.

Some Implications for the Larger Society

In their recently-published book *The Miner's Canary*, L. Guinier and G. Torres state:

Race for us is like the miners canary. Miners often carried a canary into the mine alongside them. The canary's fragile respiratory system would cause it to collapse from noxious gases long before humans were affected, thus alerting them

to danger. The canary's distress signaled that it was time to get out of the mine because the air was becoming too poisonous to breathe. Those who are racially (ethnically) marginalized are like the miner's canary. Their distress is the first sign of danger that threatens us all (2002).

In many states, minorities are fast emerging as the majority.

Writing on the future of Texas and its economy, Murdock observes that the future of the state is irrevocably tied to the state's Latino population. Based on population projections, which vary only by differing assumptions about the extent of in-migration, Murdock projects that if in-migration trends persist, Latinos will be the majority (53.1 percent) in Texas by the year 2030.

In Texas and a few other states, the emergence of Latinos as the majority group is assured, with the only issue in question being the amount of time that it may require. Murdock however notes that all groups are inter-connected and the collective well-being is interdependent. He states:

Our analysis suggests that if current patterns of population change continue and relationships between minority status, age, and particular household types and reduced resources do not change from the patterns that currently exist, the future of Texas is likely to be one of decline in per household and general public resources and increased rates of impoverishment; decreases in the competitiveness of the Texas labor force, and increased demands for services. We show as well that future markets for goods and services will and consumer expenditures will for such goods and services will be increasingly dependent on minority, older and more diverse households and populations (1999).

He also predicts that unless Texas changes the levels of past educational success experienced by Latino pupils, Texas' median family income will decrease from \$45,861 in 1999 to 42,620 in 2030, a net decline of \$3,241 per family and economic disaster for the state of Texas (Murdock et al., 1999).

At a minimum, schools are urged, in the words of IDRA founder and director emeritus Dr. Jose A. Cardenas, to "do no harm to children" as they seek to adapt to the needs of what are soon to be the nation's largest student minority and in a few states the new majority.

In his book, *Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy*, Dr. Cardenas states:

George Santayana [noted historian] observed that a people ignorant of its history are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past. It behooves us to look at the history of the early era of minority education, understand its relationship to current educational conditions and problems, and seek new avenues in our present efforts to extend educational opportunities to all. The need for improved educational opportunities based on social justice for atypical populations takes on a new significance when based on an economic need affecting the entire population. The past need for an improved education was critical for minority populations. The present need is critical for survival of our country in its world leadership role (1995).

As noted earlier, trend data suggest Texas may not be unique and in fact may be reflective of future prospects for much of the country.

IDRA also urges these new areas serving growing number of LEP pupils to avoid the dysfunctional English immersion responses emerging in such states as California. Research indicates that these responses will ill-serve many language-minority communities residing in that area.

Resources

Cardenas, J.A. *Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1999).

Guinier, L. and G. Torres. *The Minerâ€™s Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Murdock, S. â€œPopulation Changes in Texas. Implications: Implications for Human and Socioeconomic Resources in the 21st Century,â€• Presentation at the Latino Economic Summit (Austin, Texas: September 2002).

Murdock, S. and N. Hoque, M. Michael, S. White, B. Pecotte. *The Texas Challenge: Population Change and the Future of Texas* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

NCELA. *The Growing Number of Limited English Proficient Students, 2000-2001* (Washington, D.C.: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2002)
<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/states>.

OELI. *United States: Rate of LEP Student Growth; Arizona: Rate of LEP Student Growth; California: Rate of LEP Student Growth; Florida: Rate of LEP Student Growth; Illinois: Rate of LEP Student Growth; New York: Rate of LEP Student Growth; Texas: Rate of LEP Student Growth; (Washington, D.C.: Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students, October 2002).*

Presidentâ€™s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. â€œThe Road to a Diploma. A Complex Reality of Raising Educational Achievement for Hispanics In the United States,â€• an interim report (Washington, D.C.: Presidentâ€™s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, September 2002).

U.S. Senate. *Keeping The Promise: Hispanic Education and Americaâ€™s Future* (Washington D.C.: US Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee; The Congressional Hispanic Caucus. U.S. House of Representatives and US Senate Democratic Hispanic Task Force, June 2002).

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Hispanic U.S. School-Aged Population

(Ages 5 through 18)

State

1990

2000

Growth

1990 to 2000

Alabama

Alaska

Arizona
Arkansas
California
Colorado
Connecticut
Delaware
District of Columbia
Florida
Georgia
Hawaii
Idaho
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
North Carolina
North Dakota

Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Texas
Utah
Vermont
Virginia
Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming
5,972
4,624
195,536
5,537
2,009,970
113,572
56,752
4,163
5,432
303,693
24,120
22,439
16,436
247,134
28,574
9,593
26,589

5,234
20,929
1,788
26,557
77,770
57,225
16,061
4,128
16,052
3,823
10,798
30,040
170,531
155,195
506,142
16,651
1,484
39,583
25,317
31,656
63,484
11,773
7,216
1,682
7,748
1,229,873
25,635
897
34,161
62,086
2,069
28,876

7,985
17,728
7,474
364,808
22,643
3,064,819
191,690
87,968
9,819
8,374
549,965
96,738
25,836
31,607
405,421
54,222
23,086
52,867
13,399
23,483
2,760
53,253
121,267
90,342
39,179
9,018
31,197
5,599
26,167
104,575
258,416
202,239
687,447

82,689

2,307

59,428

51,126

76,526

113,338

26,454

20,819

3,257

27,557

1,800,926

55,594

1,539

74,943

128,295

2,992

54,688

8,851

197%

62%

87%

309%

53%

69%

55%

136%

54%

81%

301%

15%

92%

64%

90%

141%

99%

156%

12%

54%

101%

56%

58%

144%

119%

94%

47%

142%

248%

52%

30%

36%

397%

56%

50%

102%

142%

79%

125%

189%

94%

256%

46%

117%

72%

119%

107%

45%

89%

11%

Total

5,783,441

9,280,582

61%

Source: US Senate. Keeping the Promise: Hispanic Education and America's Future (2002).

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Resources

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(Ages 5 through 18)

State

1990

2000

Growth

1990 to 2000

Alabama

Alaska

Arizona

Arkansas

California

Colorado

Connecticut

Delaware

District of Columbia

Florida

Georgia

Hawaii

Idaho

Illinois

Indiana

Iowa

Kansas

Kentucky

Louisiana

Maine

Maryland

Massachusetts

Michigan

Minnesota

Mississippi
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Texas
Utah
Vermont
Virginia
Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming
5,972
4,624
195,536
5,537
2,009,970
113,572

56,752
4,163
5,432
303,693
24,120
22,439
16,436
247,134
28,574
9,593
26,589
5,234
20,929
1,788
26,557
77,770
57,225
16,061
4,128
16,052
3,823
10,798
30,040
170,531
155,195
506,142
16,651
1,484
39,583
25,317
31,656
63,484
11,773

7,216
1,682
7,748
1,229,873
25,635
897
34,161
62,086
2,069
28,876
7,985
17,728
7,474
364,808
22,643
3,064,819
191,690
87,968
9,819
8,374
549,965
96,738
25,836
31,607
405,421
54,222
23,086
52,867
13,399
23,483
2,760
53,253

121,267

90,342

39,179

9,018

31,197

5,599

26,167

104,575

258,416

202,239

687,447

82,689

2,307

59,428

51,126

76,526

113,338

26,454

20,819

3,257

27,557

1,800,926

55,594

1,539

74,943

128,295

2,992

54,688

8,851

197%

62%

87%

309%

53%

69%

55%

136%

54%

81%

301%

15%

92%

64%

90%

141%

99%

156%

12%

54%

101%

56%

58%

144%

119%

94%

47%

142%

248%

52%

30%

36%

397%

56%

50%

102%

142%

79%

125%

189%

94%

256%

46%

117%

72%

119%

107%

45%

89%

11%

Total

5,783,441

9,280,582

61%

Source: US Senate. Keeping the Promise: Hispanic Education and America's Future (2002).

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