



Preparing All Teachers to
Educate Linguistically and
Culturally Diverse Students

Executive Summary



BRIEF SERIES
Executive Summary

Acknowledgements

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About the Series: This is a three-part series written by the Latino Policy Forum (see Appendix for the preparation of the brief series). The purpose of the series is to promote the importance of linguistic and cultural responsiveness in both pre-and in-service teacher preparation. The initial policy brief provides demographic data and research to illustrate the rise of diversity within the Illinois student population and how it differs with the largely white, female, and monolingual workforce. The second summarizes growing scholarly consensus on the specified knowledge and skills all teachers need to be linguistically responsive. The final brief summarizes current education policies and implications for linguistically and culturally diverse students followed by a call to action with a specific policy framework for change.

Changing education systems—like raising a child—takes the efforts of the entire community: educators, parents, policy-makers, elected and appointed officials, nonprofit leaders, community representatives, students themselves, and many others. It is the Forum's expectation that this series will have a positive impact on all those who are directly or indirectly concerned about teacher preparedness for today's classroom.

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago-area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum strives to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community. It does this by conducting analysis to inform, influence, and lead, all with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future.

Our mission: To build the power, influence, and leadership of the Latino community through collective action to transform public policies that ensure the well-being of our community and society as a whole. The Latino Policy Forum works to ensure that all Latino children have access to high-quality education services that are linguistically and culturally responsive.

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The views expressed in this brief series are explicitly those of the Latino Policy Forum and should not be taken to represent the views of any of our contributors, volunteers, work group members, or their affiliated organizations.

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The advent of the Common Core State Standards heightens the need for all students to master the academic language of the classroom. To achieve this for linguistically and culturally diverse students, particularly the growing number of English Language Learners (ELLs), requires a new level of expertise for educators on how to support and integrate a student's home language—even if the teacher does not speak that language. Longitudinal research contends that support of a child's home language development over time not only builds English proficiency, but provides enduring positive effects on their academic achievement. This is particularly evident in student reading and academic achievement over time.¹ It is not, however, solely support for the home language provided by bilingual/ESL specialists that reaps such rewards. The academic success for English Learners stems from all educators being invested in addressing the needs of these children. Language, literacy, and content area teaching are the shared responsibility of both bilingual/English as a Second language (ESL) specialists and general education teachers.

The question is not *if* all Illinois teachers and educational leadership should be prepared to meet the spectrum of linguistic and cultural diversity in their classrooms, but *how* to implement plans that improve their linguistic and cultural responsiveness.

Recommendations

- 1** Implement standards to drive pre-service coursework specific to preparing linguistically and culturally responsive teachers. The teaching standards would be informed by a coherent framework with appropriate specificity for bilingual, ESL, and general education pre-service PreK-12th grade teachers.
- 2** Ensure quality implementation of linguistically and culturally responsive teaching standards within all pre-service teacher programs to include two- and four- year institutions and alternative education programs.

- 3** Implement pre- and in-service preparation policies and guidelines so the teaching standards influence: (1) licensure examinations (2) field experiences (3) faculty expertise (4) ongoing professional development (5) teacher evaluations and (6) school- and district-level collaboration.

Today's Students

Close to one of every four Illinois public school children speaks a language other than English in their home (22 percent)². Many of them are or were identified as ELLs —now close to one out of every 10 students statewide. Their numbers have grown an astonishing 83 percent over the last 15 years.³ As they transition into general education classrooms, the need for language and academic support continues.

Today's Teachers

The increasing diversity of the Illinois student body stands in stark contrast to the state's teacher demographics—largely white, female, and monolingual.⁴ Teachers, as research demonstrates, want preparation to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse student body.⁵ Emerging research also suggests that gaps between ELL and non-ELL students can be minimized when teachers are trained with the specific knowledge and skills to support ELLs in the classroom.⁶

The foundation for teacher effectiveness is how well they are prepared to teach the children who are in front of them. All educators – teacher, principals, service providers – need the same important training: they must be prepared to build on the cultural, linguistic, familial, and community influences their students bring to the classroom. This knowledge will help educators support the academic success of the multicultural students who make up today's student population. The future of Illinois is tied to the educational success of this vibrant and growing student population.

Endnotes

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- ² U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey. Table 16. *Detailed Languages Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over for Illinois: 2006-2008*.
- ³ "Illinois Advisory Council on Bilingual Education Report" (2011) Accessed May 30, 2013: http://www.isbe.state.il.us/bilingual/pdfs/IACBE_pa097-0305_report120111.pdf
- ⁴ Illinois State Board of Education (2011). *Educator Supply and Demand in Illinois: 2011 Annual Report*. Accessed November 10, 2014: http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/pdfs/ed_supply_demand_11.pdf
- ⁵ Gandara, Patricia, Julie Maxwell-Drolly, Anne Driscoll (2005) "Listening to Teachers of English Language Learners," Accessed November 10, 2014: <http://www.wested.org/resources/listening-to-teachers-of-english-language-learners-a-survey-of-california-teachers-challenges-experiences-and-professional-development-needs/>

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- ⁶ Samson, Jennifer F. and Brian A. Collins (April 2012). "Preparing All Teachers to Meet the Needs of English Language Learners. Applying Research to Policy and Practice for Teacher Effectiveness." Center for American Progress. Accessed November 10, 2014: http://www.american-progress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2012/04/pdf/ell_report.pdf