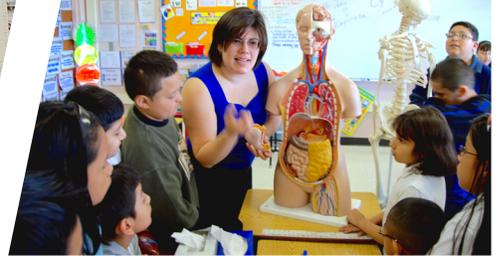




STATISTICS ON LATINOS  
BY LATINO POLICY FORUM



PHOTOS: OLGA LOPEZ

## Latino Policy Forum 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

# EDUCATION FOR LATINO FAMILIES

### IMPACT STATEMENT

As a result of equitable access to high quality education, Latinos and English Learners attain college and career readiness, maintain their language and culture as assets in a global society, and advance in economic prosperity.

### GOAL

All Latino children and English Learners have access to high quality education that is linguistically and culturally responsive. The Forum accomplishes this by informing the community through issue education and analysis along with influencing policy by leveraging relationships with statewide lawmakers and administrative leaders. We also lead and participate in coalitions with key stakeholders to inform policy agendas.

When the Latino Policy Forum revitalized its agenda ten years ago, extensive focus groups and listening tours were conducted with Latino civic and neighborhood leaders. Above all else, the issue of public education was the key area of concern for the Latino community in Illinois. The Forum has taken this charge seriously over the past decade, forging significant policy changes that have increased Latino access to quality early childhood services; promoted a PreK-12th Grade system responsive to language and cultural diversity; and provided parents and community leaders with the knowledge and tools to support Latino children's academic success. The success of Latinos is essential not only for the sustainability of the communities they come from, but for Illinois as whole.

### BRINGING TOGETHER DIVERSE COALITIONS

During these 10 years, the Forum has convened community partners and leaders through its Acuerdo network. For the Early Childhood Acuerdo, this includes 10 Chicago-based community early childhood providers who offer an array of comprehensive services to largely young Latinos and their families. They serve as critical partners for providing an on-the-ground perspective for how policy can impact practice. Their expertise is vital for informing policy goals, as well as developing and implementing successful advocacy strategies for the families and communities that we serve.

The Forum also convenes English Learner Directors in statewide councils along with immigrant parents who participate in Bilingual Parent Advisory Councils. The convening of diverse constituencies is a critical element for informing policy analysis and action.

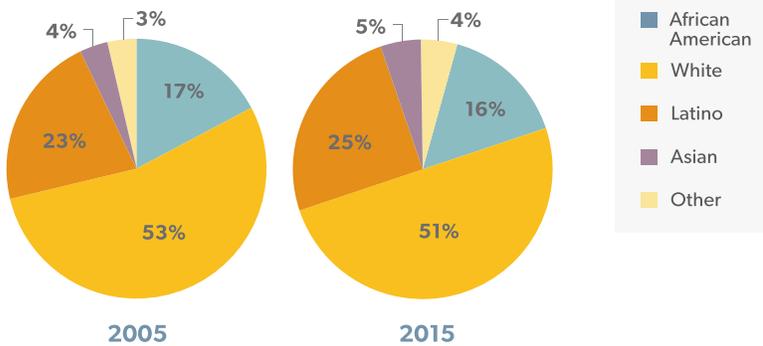
## EQUITABLE ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION

Brain development during a child’s first five years is critical; the earliest years of life are the building blocks for later success. Cultivating strong brain development early on establishes the foundation for future emotional, social, and academic learning.

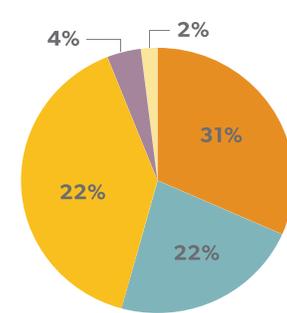
Today in Illinois, one-in-four children under age five is Latino. The state has made significant gains in supporting their access to early childhood services and programs. Latinos now make-up one-third of all students within state-funded preschool programming.

While increased access is critical, the quality of these programs is of equal significance. For many of the state’s young Latino learners, this entails access to programs that are linguistically and culturally responsive. English Learners, like all children, are not only able to learn subject content in two languages, but they are likely to gain cognitively, linguistically, culturally and, in the end, academically from dual language learning. During the infant-toddler years, the brain is most adept for learning multiple languages. Early language exposure and learning does not postpone the acquisition of English, but catalyzes increased brain activity in ways that enhances future learning.

**Illinois Children (Under 5) By Race/Ethnicity (2005 & 2015)**



**FY16 Preschool Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**



## PROMOTING BILINGUALISM WITHIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Illinois was the first state to mandate bilingual services within state-funded preschools. However, implementing this mandate has been greatly hindered by the lack of linguistic or culturally competent early childhood teachers and support staff. The Forum works to prevent bilingual programming from falling into the margins. In Illinois, the percentage of students who identify as an English Learner has grown dramatically, 83 percent over a 15-year period. Seventy-three percent of these students are Latinos. As mentioned, some English Learners enroll in school

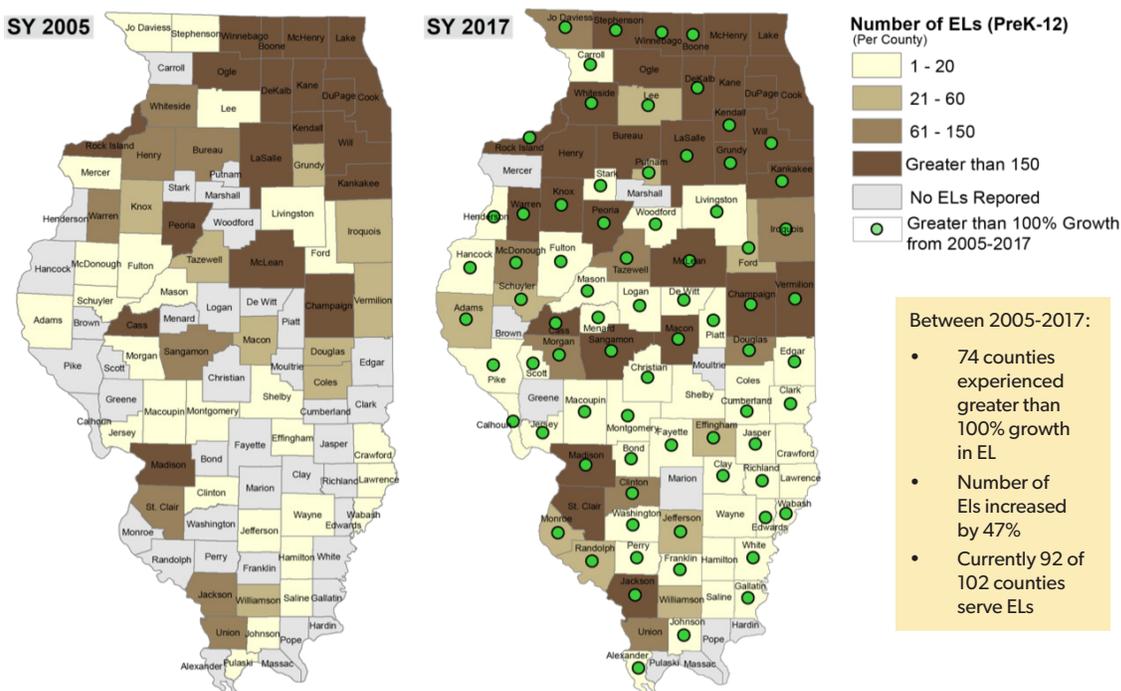
as 3- and 4-year-olds attending early childhood programs where they are identified and may receive services through the elementary years. This population is young, vibrant, and growing, with 65 percent concentrated in PreK to 3rd Grade.

The Forum led the development of English Learner recommendations, in partnership with the Illinois Advisory Council on Bilingual Education, that were adopted by the state of Illinois in its plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Given new changes in school accountability, now more than half of

public schools will be held accountable for the following: How English Learners grow in their English language proficiency and their attainment and growth on English Language Arts and mathematics assessments. To inform this work, the Forum conducted local and national convenings; partnered with

the Migration Policy Institute to deepen understanding for how English language proficiency should be part of accountability, and conducted a listening tour with more than 300 immigrant parents to ensure their perspectives helped to inform the state’s new accountability plan.

### County Estimates of English Learners SY 2005 to 2017, PreK-12



### SECURED FUNDING FOR LATINOS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

In 2017-18, the Forum led a \$38 million increase in funding for bilingual education PreK-12th grade—a 40 percent increase; the largest boost in decades.

In addition, the Forum, together with its advocate partners, secured \$140 million in additional funding for Latinos in public education including:

- \$45 million in capital grants to build or rehab early education centers in order to provide access to thousands more children; this includes \$5 million to facilities in largely Latino communities, such as Belmont Cragin.
- Joint advocacy secured \$50 million to the Early Childhood Block Grant for five years, amounting to an additional \$250 million – the largest increase ever.
- Secured \$500,000 in Gateways scholarships to assist teachers in pursuit of the bilingual/English as a Second Language endorsement.

## SHIFTING THE LANDSCAPE OF EDUCATION POLICY FOR LATINO CHILDREN

The Forum brought Latino student issues into the mainstream of education policy discussions statewide in the following ways:

- Co-led the development of a subset of early childhood education recommendations. These were part of the Early Learning Council's efforts under the newly revised school accountability recommendations to comply with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mandates.
- In Partnership with Ounce of Prevention Fund, convened a group of experts to craft recommendations to increase the number of early childhood professionals who can serve children from diverse language and cultural backgrounds.
- Chairing an effort to boost the pipeline of bilingual early childhood educators.
- Continued work with the Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Advisory Council of Education on the implementation of the new school accountability and funding formula.
- Delivering parent and caregiver-focused workshops and webinars to Chicagoland early childhood providers that highlight current immigration policies along with supports for families in need.
- Developing resources for immigrant families that aim to aggregate the myriad of services and programs offered throughout the state. The list also provides a plan of action, should a family member be detained or deported, that can be tailored to meet diverse family needs.
- Implementing and expanding the Abriendo Puertas program, the nation's first evidence-based, popular education model. The program has provided 1,700 parents from over 60 organizations across Illinois with leadership training developed in Spanish by and for Latinos with children from birth to age five.

## PROMOTING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

The Forum trained hundreds of parents to engage with lawmakers in Springfield during advocacy days that helped build their understanding of the state budget and how they could influence policy on behalf of their children. Additional parental outreach included:

- Training thousands of immigrant parents on Illinois' heightened academic standards, new assessments, and changes to mathematic education in conjunction with Bilingual Parent Advisory Councils.

## GROUND-BREAKING INNOVATIONS TO BENEFIT FUTURE GENERATIONS OF LATINO CHILDREN

The Forum will continue its efforts to ensure that new accountability and funding is implemented in Illinois in a way that is equitable. This includes innovative partnership with the Illinois Association of Principals, School Administrators, and School Board Members to create English Learner Guidance for schools.

In addition, the Forum is working on a groundbreaking study with the University of Chicago's Consortium of School Research that will explore the unique trajectory of English Learners as they progress from early childhood through the 12th Grade.

Finally, the Forum's commitment to inform, influence and lead will remain resolute.

### ABOUT SOL

SOL is a series of periodic policy briefs that combines data with insightful analysis from the Latino Policy Forum. The series will provide a unique snapshot of the growth, influence and challenges of the local Latino community, for use by community leaders, urban planners, elected officials, journalists, and anyone interested in building a shared future for all of Illinois.

### Lead Authors

Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro PhD  
Manager of Education Policy and Research

José Marco-Paredes  
Trainer and Communications Specialist

Erika Méndez  
Senior Education Policy Analyst

### Editors

Barbara Buell

Manny Gonzales  
Communications Director

### Executive Director

Sylvia Puente

### Format and Design

Daniela Campos

Latino Policy Forum  
180 N. Michigan Ave. Suite 1250  
Chicago, IL 60601  
312-376-1766 (tel) | 312-376-1760 (fax)  
[www.latinopolicyforum.org](http://www.latinopolicyforum.org)