
CONCLUDING COMMENTS

We, the members of the Hispanic Dropout Project, submit this *Final Report* to the United States Secretary of Education, with an urgency born of recognizing the devastating personal, social, and civic consequences that will accrue if Hispanic dropout rates do not improve.



*"The income stratification that concentrates large numbers of low-income students into poorly funded schools is followed by instructional stratification, most often on the basis of prior performance. Low-achieving students are likely to be exposed to instructional practices—tracking and grade retention—that deny them educational opportunities, stigmatize them, and contribute to their sense of uncertainty and alienation. Many disadvantaged adolescents are unable to overcome these conditions. Students from low-income families are far more likely to receive bad grades or be held back, and as much as three times more likely to drop out before completing high school, than the children of more affluent families: 'consigning them to lives without the knowledge and skills they need to exist anywhere but on the margins of our society, and consigning the rest of us to forever bear the burden of their support.'" In Panel on High-Risk Youth, National Research Council. (1993). *Losing generations: Adolescents in high-risk settings* (p. 103). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.*

The overall school completion rate has steadily increased, with some fluctuations, over the last 40 years: in the 1950s, an average of 40–50 percent of all students did not finish high school; in 1972, the overall dropout rate for people between 16 and 24 years of age was slightly less than 15 percent; in 1994, it was 11.5 percent. The gap in black–white school completion rate has been steadily closing over the past 20 years *through an increase in school completion by African Americans*: in 1972, about 21 percent of black, non-Hispanics between 16 and 24 years old had dropped out of school; in 1994, that rate was 12.6 percent—a drop of between 8 and 9 percentage points. In contrast, over the same time period, the average rate of white, non-Hispanic dropout decreased from approximately 12.5 percent to 10.5 percent—just 2 percentage points. In spite of this overall improvement in the school completion rate, the dropout rate for all Hispanics ages 16 to 24 in the United States has consistently hovered at between 30 percent and 35 percent. *There is no reason to expect that this unacceptably high rate of dropping out among Hispanic students will diminish on its own without major changes in our schools and society.*

The Census Bureau reports that there will be at least one million more elementary school students in our nation's schools by the end of the decade. Without adequate funding, classes will become even more overcrowded. Teachers hired to teach the baby boomers will be retiring in unprecedented numbers over the next decade. This provides an unprecedented opportunity to educate and recruit a *diverse* teaching workforce over the same time period.

We submit this report with impatience because we know that ours is not the first report to note this consistent disparity in school completion rates. Under previous Republican and Democratic

administrations, researchers, policymakers, and community advocates have spoken out about these disparities. Yet because little has been done to address them, the problems they identified have become a crisis that threatens this nation's well being.



"Programs for disadvantaged youth include those that aim to enhance the relevance of school to the students' future. If it is true that working- and lower-class adolescents believe that the social conformity and academic achievement demanded in school are not clearly linked to their future status in society, then efforts to establish this linkage in the minds of students should be successful in promoting academic achievement and educational attainment." In Natriello, G., McDill, E. L., & Pallas, A. M. (1990). *Schooling disadvantaged children: Racing against catastrophe* (p. 136). New York: Teachers College Press.

We submit this report with impatience because we know that, when the nation decides that something is a problem and sets its mind to do something about that problem, it moves—though often slowly—to solve the problem. The nation and its schools have risen to the challenges of dropout prevention for students in general, improving overall student achievement, starting to close the racial achievement gap, and starting to close the mathematics achievement gap between males and females. Critics from opposite ends of the political and educational spectra have often written as if there has been very little progress or even deterioration in our educational progress—as if the nation and its education systems were incapable of developing a consensus to do something about vexing social problems. The evidence clearly shows quite the contrary: *The nation and its schools can rise to the challenge when we set our collective will to do so.*

Improvement in overall school completion, student achievement, and the achievement gaps has taken decades. Progress in these areas could not be seen or measured in terms of election-year cycles or other yardsticks used by those seeking immediate payoffs or simple solutions. What is more, efforts to identify the cause for such trends—as if a simple, magic pill could be found—have been unsuccessful. We speculate that these improvements can be traced to a combination of factors. First, there has been a gradual change in the nation's beliefs so that high dropout rates, low achievement, and race- and gender-based achievement gaps have become unacceptable: Our expectations of minorities and women have risen. Second, the nation has developed a complex network of curricular and teaching innovations, school-based programs, community-based efforts, and other structural changes for educating students.



"No single model can encourage membership or respond to the specific educational needs and desires of all at-risk youth . . . A multiplicity of interventions is required. Even then, however, some students may continue to resist the efforts of teachers whom they see as representatives of an opposing culture. . . Many students are in fact willing to enter into the relationships with their teachers that foster social membership in the school. They become partners in the experience of 'us and us' . . . Overcoming their sense of incongruity, formerly at-risk youth discover that their teachers can also be friends, and schooling can thus be a positive rather than an aversive experience." In Wehlage, G. G., Rutter, R. A., Smith, G. A., Lesko, N., & Fernandez, R. R. (1989). *Reducing the risk: Schools as communities of*

support (pp. 203-204). London: The Falmer Press.

We submit this report with a sense of urgency and impatience precisely because of the slow pace of improvement. Hispanics confront too many excuses for the country's inaction regarding their educational status. Ways to improve the schools that Hispanics attend and solutions to Hispanic dropout are known; they should be implemented on a large scale. There are dozens of proven, replicable programs capable of increasing Hispanic students' achievement, increasing their high school completion, and increasing their college enrollment—we visited many of them. *Only a lack of political leadership, will, and resources keeps the nation from solving the problem; there is no shortage of effective models.*

The solutions that we propose in this report support one another. Our recommendations should be implemented together if the nation is to make a significant impact in reducing the Hispanic dropout rate. It would be most unfortunate if those who read our report were to selectively interpret our findings and recommendations as meaning that before they can do something, someone else must fulfill a specific task. We cannot stress enough: *Everything must work in synchronization.*

Youth are influenced by their family, school and community contexts. High-risk youth are most often required to function in contexts that are dysfunctional or antithetical to the nurturing and support children require. Consequently, if an intervention is expected to succeed it will have to address all three contexts in such a way as to enhance the effectiveness of the contexts and to increase the coordination and communication between contexts. . . . Effective middle school interventions must accomplish six functions.

(a) Frequent (in some cases hourly but generally daily or weekly) and on-going (sustained throughout the school year) monitoring of the youth's school performance.

(b) Close teamwork with parents including parent training in terms of being an effective educational consumer and issues with raising a teenager.

(c) A case manager is essential to coordinating services provided and linking school, home and community together into a cohesive structure for the youth.

(d) The intervention must respond to the individual needs of youth and must be sufficiently flexible to personalize the educational experience.

(e) A social cognitive problem-solving approach that teaches the youth and parents how to effectively handle short- and long-term challenges is highly effective in making high-risk youth less impulsive, more independent and more goal oriented.

(f) The intervention must actively attempt to change the youth's expectations and vision of the future from one of probable failure and hopelessness to one of hopefulness and possibility.

In Larson, K., & Rumberger, R. (1995). *ALAS, Achievement for Latinos through academic success* (Dropout prevention and intervention project targeting middle school youth with learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorders at risk for dropping out of school. Project evaluation: 1990-1995), pp. A67-A68.

Why, then, the persistent gap in Hispanic school completion? Many explanations have been offered: student characteristics such as social class, language, and achievement level—especially among recent immigrants; school-based forces such as student retention, ability grouping, and tracking; and nonschool forces such as family and/or neighborhood violence and criminal activity, lack of community-based economic opportunity, and the historical social and political oppression of different ethnic groups. Many of these “reasons” have assumed mythic proportions. They are used to explain a phenomenon that is portrayed as too large and too complex for schools to address. In short, these reasons have become little more than excuses for our schools’ and society’s failure to act.

The evidence that we have presented in this report clearly contradicts this counsel of despair. At our hearings around the nation, we heard Hispanic students, their parents, and community leaders tell us unequivocally that they care deeply about their schools. Through their words and actions, many school personnel, community representatives, and business people have shown that something can and must be done.

We propose an alternative reason for the persistent gap in Hispanic school completion: *Hispanic dropout rates have remained largely an invisible problem to all but Hispanic students, their parents, and their communities.* Although many researchers and a few policymakers have known about the problem, discussions of Hispanic dropout have often been submerged in discussions of dropouts in general, the education of ethnic minorities in general, or politicized debates about immigration, language, and bilingualism.



“You have to do it for yourself. In spite of all the obstacles, I had to overcome all of the people who said that I couldn’t make it. Also, bring someone along with you. My sister, who dropped out, will come back to school. She sees I’m going to graduate. That encourages her.” Participant at HDP student leader forum, New York City

Attention to Hispanic school completion must become a salient part of the national agenda on education. To reverse the long-standing disparity in school completion between Hispanics and other groups will require the long-term, sustained attention that other issues have received. That this crisis has remained largely invisible results in inaction and allows the many excuses for doing nothing to go unchallenged. At a time of a dramatically increasing need for a well-educated citizenry, the nation cannot afford, nor can it tolerate, the persistently high rate of Hispanic dropout. We, as a people, need to say: *No more excuses, the time to act is now.*

Appendix C

People and Organizations Who Presented Handouts to the Hispanic Dropout Project

Abraham Lincoln Community High School, Los Angeles, California.

ALAS (Achievement for Latinos Through Academic Success), University of California, Santa Barbara.

Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Alternative Resources, Changing Adolescent Behavior, Ontario, California.

ASPIRA of New York, Brooklyn, New York.

AVANCE, Family Support and Education Programs, Houston, Texas.

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program, San Diego, California.

Berriozábal, M. P., San Antonio, Texas.

Board of Education of The City of New York, New York, New York.

Calexico Unified School District, Calexico, California.

Center for Applied Linguistics, Program in Immigrant Education, Washington, District of Columbia.

Children's Aid Society, New York, New York.

Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Columbia University, New York, New York.

COPS/METRO, San Antonio, Texas.

Communities in Schools of New Mexico, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Cuban American National Council, Inc., Miami, Florida.

Dade County Public Schools, Dropout Prevention Programs, Miami, Florida.

De Jesus, J. N., New York, New York.

Dewitt Clinton High School, Bronx, New York.

Durocher, E. N., New York, New York.

Gira, R., San Diego County Office of Education, San Diego, California.

Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Business Group, Miami, Florida.

Hernandez, L., Hostos Community College, Bronx, New York.

Home Economics Department, Eastern New Mexico University, Portales, New Mexico.

Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science, Bronx, New York.

HOSTS (Help One Student To Succeed) Corporation, Vancouver, Washington.

Houston Independent School District, Houston, Texas.

Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), San Antonio, Texas.

Kravitz, L., New Mexico Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, University of California, San Diego, California.

Lennox School District, Lennox, California.

Little Havana Institute, Cuban American National Council, Miami, Florida.

Lincoln Senior High School, Los Angeles, California.

Mains Elementary School, Calexico, California.

MANA de Albuquerque, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Mar Vista High School, Imperial Beach, California.

Mathematica Research Policy Institute, Inc., Washington, District of Columbia.

Mesilla Alternative Learning Center, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Mesilla Valley Youth Foundation, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Miami Beach Senior High School, Miami Beach, Florida.

National Diffusion Network, The Coca Cola Valued Youth Program, Washington, District of Columbia.

National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina.

New Mexico Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico.

New Mexico MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement) Inc., Albuquerque, New Mexico.

New Mexico Youth at Risk Foundation, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

New Workplace for Women Project, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Office of the Superintendent of Bronx High Schools, New York, New York.

Padilla-King, T., Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Project GRAD, Houston, Texas.

Project GRADS, Portales, New Mexico.

Re: Learning New Mexico, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Research Triangle Institute, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

San Andres High School, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

San Antonio Board of Education, San Antonio, Texas.

San Antonio Education Partnership, San Antonio, Texas.

San Diego County Office of Education, San Diego, California.

Society of Mexican American Engineers and Scientists, San Antonio, Texas.

South Beach Alternative School, Miami Beach, Florida.

Southwest Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas.

Starbase Kelly Youth Program, San Antonio, Texas.

Success for All, Houston, Texas.

Success STArTS with Hope!, Miami, Florida.

Systemic Initiative in Mathematics and Science Education, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Texas Interfaith Fund, Alliance Schools Project, Houston, Texas.

Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, Arecibo, Puerto Rico.

United Services Automobile Association (USAA), Mentor and Junior Achievement Program, San Antonio, Texas.

Vasquez, O. and M. Cole, Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, University of California, La Jolla, California.

Young, M., The Little Havana Institute, Miami, Florida.

Wechsler, N. M., DeWitt Clinton High School, The Bronx, New York.

Youth Development, Inc., Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Zamora, G., Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, San Antonio, Texas.

Appendix E

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Key Indicators of Hispanic Student Achievement:



National Goals and Benchmarks
for the Next Decade

Key Indicators of Hispanic Student Achievement: National Goals and Benchmarks for the Next Decade

Education is the key to individual opportunity, the strength of our economy, and the vitality of our democracy. In the 21st century, this nation cannot afford to leave anyone behind. While the academic achievement and educational attainment of Hispanic Americans has been moving in the right direction, untenable gaps still exist between Hispanic students and their counterparts in the areas of early childhood education, learning English, academic achievement, and high school and college completion.

Hispanics will represent more than one-quarter of school-age children in the United States by 2025. These children are more likely than others to be educationally and economically disadvantaged. Presently, 36 percent of Hispanic students live in families whose income is below the poverty line. As a result, Hispanic students are concentrated in high-poverty, largely racially isolated schools, and they often have limited access to the resources needed for academic success, such as highly qualified teachers, small classes, 21st century technology, and modern school buildings.

As the fastest growing racial or ethnic group in America's public schools, Hispanic students have the unique potential to positively affect the economic and cultural future of the United States. Ensuring the promise of this diverse group of learners requires the attention and commitment of the entire country. We must work harder to close the educational achievement gaps between Hispanic students and the nation as a whole. This must begin with high expectations for achievement, clear goals for what must be accomplished, and specific benchmarks to measure our progress.

This report defines national goals for improving the educational achievement of Hispanic students. These include providing access to quality early childhood education, learning English, closing the academic achievement gaps, increasing the rate of high school completion, and doubling the rate of postsecondary degree attainment. These goals focus on results and, in some areas, include indicators that provide a clear picture of the progress that must be made. In other areas, key indicators must be developed to effectively gauge progress and achievement. This report is intended to serve not only as an annual measure of national progress, but as a tool for use by stakeholders at all levels and in all sectors to galvanize action and boost Hispanic student achievement throughout the country.

GOAL 1: Early Childhood

Ensure that Hispanic American children have access to high-quality early childhood education and development programs and enter school prepared to succeed by increasing the Hispanic participation rate to the national participation rate in high-quality programs by 2010.

KEY OUTCOME INDICATOR:

	Baseline Year	Age	Hispanic	National
Percentage of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children who were enrolled in center-based or kindergarten programs. ¹	1999	3	26%	46%
		4	64%	70%
		5	89%	93%

All percentages rounded.

OTHER OUTCOME INDICATORS:

	Baseline Year	Hispanic	National
Percentage of eligible children who were enrolled in Head Start programs. ²	1998	36%	40%
Percentage of 3-to 5-year-olds who were read to by a family member on a daily basis. ³	1999	33%	53%

GOAL 2: Learning English

Respecting the importance of multi-lingualism, age-specific learning needs, different research-based instructional approaches, and the variety of developmental levels at which limited English proficient (LEP) children enter school, by 2010 all states and school districts will provide appropriate language instruction to ensure that all students graduate from high school having demonstrated proficiency in English.

KEY OUTCOME INDICATOR:

To be developed: There are more than 3.5 million children with limited English proficiency in U.S. schools. These children need sufficient proficiency to succeed in the full academic program, however, there are no national data on their progress in learning English. The Secretary of Education will be responsible for developing an adequate indicator to regularly measure the English language proficiency of these students, such as through the collection of state or national sample data.

GOAL 3: Eliminating the Achievement Gap

Provide a high-quality education with appropriate resources and support to ensure equal opportunity for all students in order to eliminate the achievement gap between Hispanic students and other students on appropriate state assessments and other indicators by 2010.

KEY OUTCOME INDICATORS:

To be developed: By 2001, under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, states are required to have aligned assessments that test all students at three grade intervals and report data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, as well as by English proficiency.

	Baseline Year	Hispanic	National
Percentage of elementary, middle, and high school students in each state who scored at or above the proficient level on the reading and math sections of aligned state assessments.	2001	Data not yet available	Data not yet available

OTHER OUTCOME INDICATORS:

	Baseline Year	Hispanic	National
Percentage of <i>fourth</i> graders who scored at or above the proficient level on the reading section of the NAEP test. ⁴	1998	13%	31%
Percentage of <i>fourth</i> graders who scored at or above the proficient level on the mathematics section of the NAEP test. ⁵	1996	8%	22%
Percentage of <i>eighth</i> graders who scored at or above the proficient level on the reading section of the NAEP test. ⁶	1998	15%	33%
Percentage of <i>eighth</i> graders who scored at or above the proficient level on the mathematics section of the NAEP test. ⁷	1996	9%	24%
Students' average mathematics SAT score. ⁸	1999	458	511
Students' average verbal SAT score.	1999	457	505

GOAL 4: Eliminating the Gap in High School Completion

Increase the high school completion rate for Hispanic students to 90 percent by 2010.

KEY OUTCOME INDICATOR:

	Baseline Year	Hispanic	National
Percentage of 18- to 24- year olds who had either a high school diploma or a GED. ⁹	1998	63%	85%

OTHER OUTCOME INDICATORS:

	Baseline Year	Hispanic	National
Percentage of students ages 15 to 24 in grades 10-12 who were enrolled in high school the previous October but were <i>not</i> enrolled and had not graduated by the following October. ¹⁰	1998	9%	5%
Percentage of students ages 16 to 24 <i>born outside the U.S.*</i> who were <i>not</i> enrolled in school and did not complete high school. ¹¹	1997	39%	24%
Percentage of <i>first generation*</i> students aged 16-24 born within the U.S. who were not enrolled in school and did not complete high school.	1997	15%	10%

*Individuals born in Puerto Rico and the U.S. territories are considered *born outside the U.S.*.

Individuals are classified as *first generation* if they were born in the 50 states or DC and at least one of their parents was not.

GOAL 5: Increasing Postsecondary Completion

Double the percentage of Hispanic Americans who earn associate's and bachelor's degrees by 2010.

KEY OUTCOME INDICATORS:

	Baseline Year	Hispanic	National
Percentage of individuals ages 25- to 29 who held a bachelor's degree or higher. ¹²	1998	10%	27%
Percentage of individuals ages 25- to 29 who held an occupational or academic associate's degree.	1998	6%	9%

OTHER OUTCOME INDICATORS:

	Baseline Year	Hispanic	National
Percentage of high school graduates who completed four years of English and three years of mathematics, science, and social studies. ¹³	1998	40%	55%
Percentage of individuals ages 16 to 24 who had graduated from high school in the preceding 12 months and were enrolled in college the following October. ¹⁴	1998	55%	66%
Percentage of all 18- to 24-year-old high school graduates who were enrolled in institutions of higher education. ¹⁵	1998	34%	45%
Percentage of all 18- to 24-year-olds who were enrolled in institutions of higher education.	1998	20%	37%

Sources

- ¹ U.S. Department of Education, NCES. (2000). *The Condition of Education 2000*. Table 2-1.
- ² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start Bureau. (June, 2000) Special computation by Craig Turner.
- ³ U.S. Department of Education, NCES. (1999). *National Household Education Survey, Parent Interview*. Special Tabulation by the Education Statistical Services Institute.
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- ⁵ U.S. Department of Education, NCES. (May, 2000). *NAEP Summary data table*
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- ¹⁰ U.S. Department of Education, NCES. (1999). *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1998*. Table 1.
- ¹¹ U.S. Department of Education, NCES. (June, 2000). *High School Dropouts by Race-Ethnicity and Recency of Migration*. Indicator of the Month.
- ¹² U.S. Census Bureau. Population Division. Education & Social Stratification Branch (1999) *Educational Attainment in the United States: March 1998 (Update)*. Table 1.
- ¹³ U.S. Department of Education, NCES. (1999). *Digest of Education Statistics 1999*. Table 142.
- ¹⁴ U.S. Department of Education, NCES. (1999). *Condition of Education 2000*. Table 32-1.
- ¹⁵ U.S. Department of Education, NCES. (1999). *Digest of Education Statistics 1999*. Table 189.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the eleventh in a series of National Center for Education Statistics reports on high school dropout and completion rates. It presents data on rates in 1998, the most recent year for which data are available, and includes time series data on high school dropout and completion rates for the period 1972 through 1998. In addition to extending time series data reported in earlier years, this report examines the characteristics of high school dropouts and high school completers in 1998.

Table A—Percentage of 15- through 24-year-olds who dropped out of grades 10–12, percentage of 16- through 24-year-olds who were dropouts, and percentage of 18- through 24-year-olds who completed high school, by race–ethnicity: October 1998

Dropout and completion measures	Total ¹	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander
Percentage of youth ages 15–24 who dropped out of grades 10–12, October 1997 to October 1998	4.8	3.9	5.2	9.4	—
Percentage of youth ages 16–24 who were dropouts in 1998	11.8	7.7	13.8	29.5	4.1
Percentage of youth ages 18–24 who were high school completers in 1998 ²	84.8	90.2	81.4	62.8	94.2

—Sample size too small for reliable estimate.

¹Due to relatively small sample sizes, American Indians/Alaskan Natives are included in the total but are not shown separately.

²Excludes those still enrolled in high school.

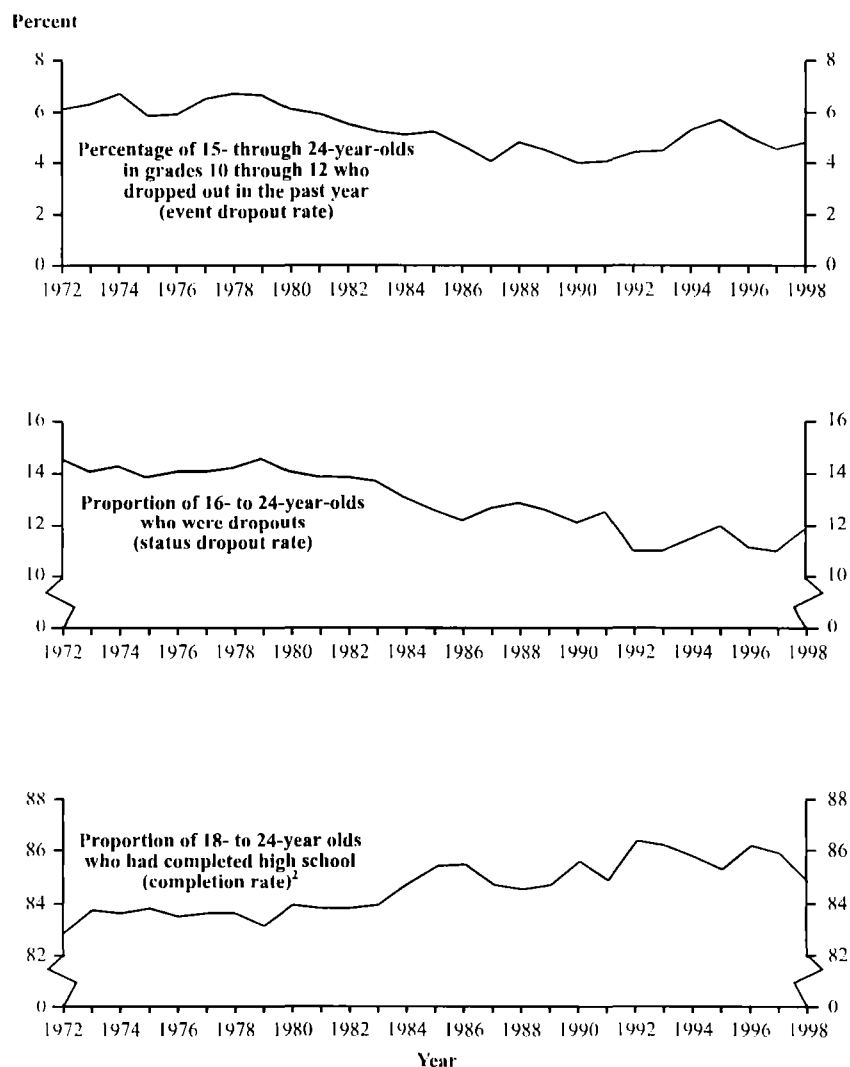
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, October 1998.

Event Dropout Rates

Event dropout rates for 1998 describe the proportion of youth ages 15 through 24 who dropped out of grades 10–12 in the 12 months preceding October 1998. Demographic data collected in the Current Population Survey (CPS) permit event dropout rates to be calculated across various individual characteristics, including race–ethnicity, sex, region of residence, and income level.

- About 5 out of every 100 young adults enrolled in high school in 1997 left school before October 1998 without successfully completing a high school program. This estimate of 4.8 percent was similar to the estimates reported over the last 10 years, but lower than those reported in the early 1970s (table A, figure A, and table 1).

Figure A—Percentage of 15- through 24-year-olds who dropped out of grades 10–12, percentage of 16- through 24-year-olds who were dropouts, and percentage of 18- through 24-year-olds who completed high school: October 1972 through October 1998¹



¹Numbers for years 1987 through 1998 reflect new editing procedures instituted by the Bureau of the Census for cases with missing data on school enrollment items. Numbers for years 1992 through 1998 reflect new wording of the educational attainment item in the CPS beginning in 1992. Numbers for years 1994 through 1998 reflect changes in the CPS beginning in 1994 due to newly instituted computer-assisted interviewing and the change in population controls used in the 1990 Census-based estimates, with adjustment for undercounting in the 1990 Census.

²Excluding those still enrolled in high school.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, October (various years).

- Hispanic students were more likely than white and black students to leave school before completing a high school program: in 1998, 9.4 percent of Hispanic students were event dropouts, compared with 3.9 percent of white and 5.2 percent of black students. The event dropout rates of white students were not significantly different from those of black students (table 1).
- In 1998, young adults living in families with incomes in the lowest 20 percent of all family incomes were four times as likely as their peers from families in the top 20 percent of the income distribution to drop out of high school (table 1).
- Although dropout rates were highest among students age 19 or older, about two-thirds (69 percent) of the current-year dropouts were ages 15 through 18; moreover, about one third (34 percent) of the 1998 dropouts were ages 15 through 17 (table 1).

Status Dropout Rates

Over the last decade, between 350,000 and 550,000 10th- through 12th-grade students left school each year without successfully completing a high school program (Table B1). Each year some of these young adults return to high school or enter an alternative certification program, and others pass out of this age group. Status dropout rates represent the proportion of young adults ages 16 through 24 who are out of school and who have not earned a high school credential.

- In October 1998, some 3.9 million young adults were not enrolled in a high school program and had not completed high school. These youths accounted for 11.8 percent of the 33 million 16- through 24-year-olds in the United States in 1998 (table A, figure A, and table 3). As noted with event rates, this estimate is consistent with the estimates reported over the last 10 years, but lower than those reported in the early 1970s.
- The status dropout rates of whites remain lower than those of blacks, but over the past quarter of a century, the difference between the rates of whites and blacks has narrowed (figure 2). In addition, Hispanic young adults in the United States continue to have higher status dropout rates than do either their white or black counterparts (figure 2).
- In 1998, 4.1 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander young adults were status dropouts, compared with 29.5 percent of Hispanics, 13.8 percent of blacks, and 7.7 percent of whites (table 3).

- Forty-four percent of Hispanic young adults born outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia were high school dropouts. Although the dropout rates of Hispanics born in the United States were lower than those of their Hispanic peers who were non-U.S.-born, they were higher than the dropout rates of non-Hispanics born in the United States (table 3).

High School Completion Rates

The high school completion rate represents the proportion of 18- through 24-year-olds who have completed a high school diploma or an equivalent credential, including a General Educational Development (GED) credential.

- In 1998, about 85 percent of all 18- through 24-year-olds not enrolled in high school had completed high school, a slight increase since the early 1970s (figure A and table A7).
- High school completion rates have increased for white and black young adults since the early 1970s, with rates of 90.2 percent for whites and 81.4 percent for blacks in 1998. However, Hispanic young adults have not shared in this improvement: 62.8 percent were reported as having completed high school in 1998 (figure 3 and table 4). In addition, Asian/Pacific Islander young adults in 1998 were more likely than their white, black, and Hispanic peers to complete high school.

Method of High School Completion

Most young adults complete a regular diploma and graduate from high school; others complete high school by an alternative route, such as passing the GED test.

- During the 1990s, the percentage of young adults not enrolled in high school who have earned a high school credential has remained relatively unchanged; however, the percentage with an alternative certification increased from 4.9 percent in 1990 to 10.1 percent in 1998, and the percentage with regular diplomas decreased by a similar amount (table 6).

black young adults, or 13.8 percent of the total black population of 16- through 24-year-olds, were dropouts in the corresponding period.

Hispanic Dropout Rates

High Hispanic dropout rates are partly attributable to relatively greater dropout rates among Hispanic immigrants. Data from the 1998 CPS appear to substantiate earlier findings (table 3).¹⁷ In fact, the status dropout rate of 44.4 percent for Hispanic 16-through 24-year-olds born outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia was at least double the rate of 20.5 percent for Hispanic youths born in the United States with at least one parent born outside the United States, and the rate of 15.8 percent for Hispanic youths with both parents born in the United States.¹⁸

In 1998, dropout rates for Hispanic youths born in the United States were lower than the dropout rates for Hispanic youths born outside the United States. However, regardless of place of birth, Hispanic young adults were more likely to be dropouts than their non-Hispanic peers.

Data from 1995 show that more than half of the foreign-born Hispanic youths who were dropouts had never enrolled in a U.S. school, and 80 percent of these young adults were reported as either speaking English “not well” or “not at all.”¹⁹ Some of the young Hispanic immigrants who do not enroll in school in the United States may have entered the country beyond what is considered “normal” high school age, and some may have come to the United States in search of employment rather than education. However, the data also suggest that language may be a barrier to participation in U.S. schools. Regardless of the reasons, for the large proportion of Hispanic young adults without a high school credential, the impact is the same: whether they were born in the 50 states or the District of Columbia or elsewhere and whether or not they enrolled in U.S. schools, these young adults probably do not have the basic level of education thought to be essential in today’s economy.

¹⁷U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1995*, NCES 97-473, by M. McMillen, P. Kaufman, and S. Klein (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997).

¹⁸For the sake of simplicity, the terms “foreign born” and “born outside the United States” are used in the text to refer to anyone born outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia, and the term “born in the United States” is used to refer to persons born within the 50 states or the District of Columbia. People born in Puerto Rico or the territories, although U.S. citizens, are grouped with those born in other countries. Because of issues related to language and schooling and because CPS does not cover the outlying areas, individuals born in Puerto Rico or the U.S. territories are distinguished from those born in the 50 states or the District of Columbia.

¹⁹See U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1995* (1997), tables 16 and 20. The English-speaking ability is based on the reports of a household respondent rather than reports from each individual in the household. These data on the ability to speak in English are limited to young adults who were reported as speaking Spanish at home.

Table 3—Status dropout rates and number and distribution of dropouts of 16- through 24-year-olds, by background characteristics: October 1998

Characteristic	Status dropout rate (percent)	Number of status dropouts (thousands)	Population (thousands)	Percent of all dropouts	Percent of population
Total	11.8	3,942	33,445	100.0	100.0
Sex					
Male	13.3	2,241	16,854	56.8	50.4
Female	10.3	1,701	16,592	43.2	49.6
Race-ethnicity ¹					
White, non-Hispanic	7.7	1,697	21,920	43.0	66.0
Black, non-Hispanic	13.8	675	4,893	17.1	14.6
Hispanic	29.5	1,487	5,034	37.7	15.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.1	55	1,356	1.4	4.1
Age					
16	3.3	133	4,000	3.4	12.0
17	6.7	266	3,938	6.7	11.8
18	13.2	524	3,955	13.3	11.8
19	14.7	580	3,947	14.7	11.8
20 through 24	13.9	2,440	17,605	61.9	52.6
Recency of immigration					
Born outside the 50 states and the District of Columbia					
Hispanic	44.4	961	2,167	24.4	6.5
Non-Hispanic	7.2	130	1,789	3.3	5.3
First generation ²					
Hispanic	20.5	315	1,538	8.0	4.6
Non-Hispanic	5.2	94	1,787	2.4	5.3
Second generation or more ³					
Hispanic	15.8	210	1,328	5.3	4.0
Non-Hispanic	9.0	2,233	24,385	56.6	74.3
Region					
Northeast	9.4	577	6,109	14.6	18.3
Midwest	8.0	622	7,772	15.8	23.2
South	13.1	1,522	11,597	38.6	34.7
West	15.3	1,221	7,967	31.0	23.8

¹Due to relatively small sample sizes, American Indians/Alaskan Natives are included in the total but are not shown separately.

²Individuals defined as "first generation" were born in the 50 states or the District of Columbia, and one or both of their parents were born outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia.

³Individuals defined as "second generation or more" were born in the 50 states or the District of Columbia, as were both of their parents.

NOTE: Because of rounding, details may not add to totals.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, October 1998.

Internal Working Paper on the Reducing the Hispanic Dropout Rate

Background

Since the 1970s, the United States has witnessed increasing completion rate and a reduction in the dropout rate for high school students across the country. In 1998, 85% of all the 18 through 24 year-olds had completed high schools, 11.8% of all 16 through 24 year-olds had dropped out of school, and 4.8% percent of 15 through 24 year-olds had dropped out during the 1997-98 school year. These reflects an improvement, albeit slight, over where we were thirty years ago.

Those improvements, however, belie the reality of the completion and dropout rates among Hispanic high school students. According to the Census Bureau, among 18 through 24 year-olds, 90.2% of non-Hispanic whites and 81.4% of non-Hispanic Blacks had completed high school in 1998. For Hispanic youth, the figure stands at only 62.8%. During the 1997-98 school year, Hispanic students aged 15 though 24 dropped out of school (the “event” dropout rate) at two and a half times the rate of non-Hispanic whites (3.9% v. 9.4%) and nearly twice the rate of non-Hispanic Blacks. Among 16 through 24 year-olds, while 7.7% of non-Hispanic Whites and 13.8% of non-Hispanic Blacks are not in school and have not earned a high school credential (the “status” dropout rate), the rate for Hispanic students is 29.5%.

There is an underlying complexity to the Hispanic dropout issue. Essentially, the dropout rate is told by two stories. The first story is that of US-born Hispanic youth. For Hispanic youth aged 16 through 24 with both parents also born in the US, the dropout rate is 15.8%. The figure rises to 20.5% for youth born in the US with at least one parent born outside the US. The other story is of Hispanic youth, aged 16 through 24, born outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia of whom 44.4% have dropped out. Data from 1995 shows that of the dropouts born outside the US, half never enrolled in a US school and 80% were reported as limited English proficient.

What these two stories reveal is that Hispanic dropout rate are partly attributable to the relatively higher dropout rates among Hispanic immigrants. That said, the lowest dropout rate for Hispanic youth (that of US born with US born parents) is still twice that of their non-Hispanic White peers and greater still than the rate for non-Hispanic Blacks.

In today’s economy, dropping out of high school is a passport to a low-wage future. Over the last twenty years, a large gap has opened between those with education beyond high school and those with less education. For those who fail to complete their high school education, opportunities in the workforce diminish greatly and access to high wage jobs is virtually shut off. As the dropout rate for Hispanic youth reaches crisis proportions, it is imperative to develop a goal and strategy for reducing the dropout rate and improving educational outcomes and opportunities for Hispanic youth.

Goal for Reducing the Hispanic Dropout Rate

The following represents four options for a goal for the National Strategy Meeting in April. The first three are concerned with the measure we use to count dropouts; the fourth suggests turning the goal on its head and establishing a goal for increasing high school completion rates rather than a goal of decreasing dropout rates.

OPTION #1 Eliminate the gap in the event dropout rate between Hispanics and the national average by 2010.

This measures the share of students aged 15 through 24 who drop out of grades 10-12 in any given year. The goal would be to reduce the Hispanic dropout rate to the national average. Alternatively, we could calculate a non-Hispanic average and attempt to reduce the rate to that figure. The event dropout rate in 1998 was 4.8% for the nation and 9.4% for Hispanic youth.

Pro: This goal would focus on putting in place a strategy to keep enrolled students in school. It would be unburdened by the fact that many young adults counted as a part of the status dropout data (16 through 24 year-olds) are past school age or immigrate to the country past the age when they can enter school.

Con: It focuses somewhat narrowly on kids who dropped out of grades 10-12. In focusing on keeping kids in school, it would not also focus on bringing former dropouts back in, which is an important goal and better measured by the status dropout rate.

OPTION #2 Eliminate the gap in the status dropout rate between Hispanics and the national average by 2010.

This measures the percentage share of students aged 16 through 24 that is not in school and has not received a high school credential. The current status rate is 11.8% for the nation and 29.5% for Hispanic youth.

Pro: This goal recognizes that efforts must be made to keep people from dropping out, bring people back into school, and help them earn high school diplomas or credentials. It deals with the entirety of Hispanic youth, not just those of school age.

Con: It is a much larger gap to close and deals with Hispanic youth who are past school age. It lumps together what are essentially two distinct groups within the Hispanic dropout subgroup: US born and immigrant Hispanic youth.

OPTION #3 Eliminate the gap in the status dropout rate between the national average and US-born Hispanic youth and cut in half the dropout rate for immigrant Hispanic youth.

This goal would have us reduce the status dropout rate for US born Hispanic youth aged 16 through 24 (with parents either US- or outside-the-US-born) from the current 20.5%

rate to the national average of 11.8%. The dropout rate for immigrant Hispanic youth is 44.4%. However, the status dropout rate for non-Hispanic immigrant youth is only 7.2%.

Pro: Provides a dual focus on US born and immigrant Hispanic youth and recognizes that these groups require some different strategies. Commits us to a doable goal with the first group (US born) and a still ambitious goal of cutting the rate in half for immigrant Hispanic youth.

Con: This approach looks like we are tucking our tail in the face of a tough problem with immigrant Hispanic youth. Furthermore, given that in 1998, non-Hispanic immigrants had a lower dropout rate than the rate for non-Hispanic Whites, it might be a tough argument to make that we need to establish dual goals.

OPTION #4 Eliminate the high school completion gap between Hispanic students and the national average.

This figure measures the share of 18 through 24 year-olds who have completed a high school diploma or received an equivalent credential. For 1998, 85% of all 18 through 24 year-olds not enrolled in high school had completed high school. For Hispanic young adults the completion rate is 62.8%.

Pro: A high school completion goal would be a positively-oriented goal for Hispanic youth: "complete high school" versus "don't drop out." In addition to a primary focus on keeping kids in high school to earn their diploma, this goal would also focus on getting those youth past HS age credentialed (GED, etc).

Con: The dropout rate is an issue with currency in the education and Hispanic communities and this might redirect too much. Could lead to a perception that we aren't addressing the dropout issue (though we would be).

General Strategy for Reducing the Dropout Rate/Increasing High School Completion to the National Average

The federal government, state and local governments, the private sector, and community-based organizations all have a role to play in reducing the Hispanic dropout rate/increasing the Hispanic high school completion rate.

The federal government is committed to help build a foundation for school success by increasing access for Hispanic students to Head Start, Title I, and after-school programs. All of these programs have been shown to bolster literacy and research shows that reading difficulties are a key indicator for dropping out of school. The federal government will also expand access for Hispanics to mentoring activities such as the Gear-UP program and the TRIO programs. In addition, through a focus on smaller schools, charter schools, and reforming the American high school, the federal government will ensure that there are high quality options available to meet the varying needs of adolescent students.

Across the Administration, executive branch agencies are also engaged in ongoing efforts to address the dropout rate and high school completion. In addition, Departments such as Education and Health and Human Services have identified action steps to be taken to improve the access to and effectiveness of programs for Hispanic youth that support this goal. These will be acknowledged in some form at the conference.

Other general strategies being undertaken by businesses, foundations and non-profit groups to reduce the dropout rate among Hispanic youth focus on the following issues:

- parent involvement
- standards and curricular reform
- school-to-work and other career awareness efforts
- counseling needs and social service access
- teacher training with a focus on expectations
- mentoring, tutoring and individualized instruction
- language mastery assistance

Deliverables by business, nonprofits and others for the conference (discussed below) should be aligned with those strategies that have proven most effective in retaining Hispanic youth in high school and encouraging high school completion.

Conference Approach

The approach is heavily dependent upon the overall conference length (and format). What follows are two possible approaches for addressing the goal of reducing the dropout rate for Hispanic Youth contingent upon conference length.

Three-hour Strategy Meeting with No Breakouts

If the conference is a 3-hour national strategy meeting in the East Room, where attendees stay put, then the meeting can only lend itself to a panel or dialogue of some sorts.

The first option for a panel would be to have an academic- or foundation-type briefly lay out what is understood about what contributes to the high Hispanic dropout rate. The panel would also include a representative from schools, business, government and nonprofits or foundations (depending on the first speaker) to respond and talk about what has been done and what needs to be done, including the commitments needed to be made. We should allow time for Q&A with a group this small (scheduling request references 150 people).

The second option for a panel would be to focus more explicitly on what has been done, what has been done well and poorly and what needs to be done still. Rather than a group of respondents, we would invite three people to deliver prepared comments on three components of the problem/challenge (components to be developed). A moderator could then handle pose some additional questions and allow Q&A.

Six-hour Strategy Meeting with Breakout Sessions

If the format were expanded beyond the scope of the scheduling request, then we would have some time for a speaker or panel and breakout sessions on component issues. The panel for the whole group could be either option as described above. Breakout sessions would follow and would either be organized along the goals and best practices or the goals and strategy to move forward. For the dropout issue, there might be three concurrent panels focusing on major issues such as language barriers, workforce preparation, and school and community partnerships.

Potential Deliverables

In addition to the continued commitment of the Clinton Administration, commitments could be made by a variety of higher education, private sector and foundation entities. Among the commitments/deliverables we might pursue are the following.

Business could commit to:

- Mentoring by employees (by hours or people)
- Establishing high school internships and school-to-work apprenticeships
- Funding a campaign on the importance of high school completion/not dropping out
- Implementing policies and advocating for parents to be involved in their children's education

Foundations could commit to:

- Funding commitment to grants initiatives that target dropout reduction/high school completion
- Funding R&D around this goal or a dissemination of best practices effort

Non-profit organizations could commit to:

- Partnerships between schools and communities to address the goal
- Commitments for mentoring/tutoring
- Focus on the language aspect of this issue (deliverable?)

Institutions of Higher Education could commit to:

- Implementing programs that develop college awareness among Hispanic youth and provide incentives for finishing school.

Federal Government could commit to:

- Continuing its HEAP expanding access and funding efforts
- Addressing needs through programs development or modifications in relevant agencies.

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What Works For Latino Youth



WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE ON EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
FOR HISPANIC AMERICANS

First Edition