



The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc.

Latino Coalition
for Early Care and Education Report:
**BUILDING ON LATINO CHILDREN'S
LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**



December 2008

The Latino/ELL Forum on Early Care and Education:

**“BUILDING ON LATINO CHILDREN'S
LANGUAGE AND CULTURE”**

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December 2008

Acknowledgements

This report is the product of the collaboration of many individuals and organizations. The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. (CHCF) thanks the National Council of La Raza (NCLR); United Way of New York City; Gladys Carrión Esq., Commissioner of the New York Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS); and Dr. Gail Mellow, President of La Guardia Community College, for their support of the Latino/English Language Learner Forum on Early Care and Education held on June 24, 2008 at Baruch College in New York City.

CHCF also thanks all of the speakers, panelists and moderators that participated in the Forum and recognizes their contributions to linguistically and culturally competent English Language Learning policies at all levels. Also, special thanks to Crescentia Coutinho, Director of Conference Services at Baruch College, for providing logistical support during the duration of the forum.

CHCF is very grateful to Luis Reyes, PH.D., Coordinator of the Coalition for Educational Excellence for English Language Learners, for providing his valuable expertise and advice, as well as being the main author of the report. CHCF thanks the co-authors of the report Krystal Reyes, M.P.A., the former Policy Analyst of Early Care and Education at The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. ; Vanessa Ramos, Esq., Deputy Director for Policy at The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc.; and Ursulina Ramirez, B.A., Policy Intern from Columbia University School of Social Work. We are very grateful for their dedication to this project. CHCF thanks Wayne Ho, Executive Director of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, for reviewing the recommendations of the report.

CHCF is also grateful to its staff and interns, Gabriel J. Rodriguez, B.A., Policy Analyst; Claudia Urey, J.D., Policy Assistant; and Mariel Frank, B.A., Policy Intern for their important contributions to the report. Special thanks to Maria Eugenia Mondejar, Executive Assistant, for the design.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Background: Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education	3
Overview: Latino/ELL Forum on Early Care and Education	5
Introduction: A Latino Perspective on New York's Early Care and Education System	6
A National Perspective on Latinos and ELLs in Early Care and Education	8
Early Care and Education Advocacy in New York	12
City and State Government: The Early Care and Education System	16
Closing Remarks	25
Recommendations	26
Conclusion	29
Appendices	30
Appendix A – Forum Moderators, Speakers and Panelists	
Appendix B – Forum Agenda	
Appendix C – New York State BETAC Locations	

“Many people like to believe that American children are generally doing quite well in school. But by the Forth Grade, more than half of White and Asian American children cannot read at grade level. For Latino, Black and American Indian children, the numbers are even worse. More than 80 percent cannot read at grade level by Fourth Grade. Most of the children who do not master the fundamentals of elementary education will require costly remediation in middle and high school. Many will struggle to avoid dropping out of school. Some will end up in prison, and most will not be able to lay claim to the American Dream.”

(Foundation for Child Development, *America's Vanishing Potential: The Case for PreK-3rd Education*, October 2008)

Executive Summary

On June 24, 2008, the Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education (LCECE) convened a public forum at Baruch College of the City University of New York (CUNY) in New York City, bringing together local, state, and national researchers, policymakers, administrators and advocates to discuss current research and practice in the field of early care and education. Convening the forum was an important step for LCECE in elaborating a framework to put into action a public education and advocacy agenda and solidify the commitment to work together to meet the needs of Latino and English Language Learner (ELL) children in the early care and education system. LCECE is a policy initiative of The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families committed to increasing the availability and quality of culturally and linguistically appropriate child care and early education for Latino children and all ELLs at both the city and state level. LCECE identified six key issue areas as critical for Latino and ELL children in the earliest years, from birth to 5 years of age. These key areas are: language access, opportunities for professionals in the field, school readiness, family engagement, a Quality Rating and Improvement System, and community involvement and outreach.

In New York City, information on Latino and ELL children under 5 reveals that:

- *32% of children under the age of 5 are Latino.*
- *In New York City public schools 15,788 kindergarteners are ELLs, 68% of whom are Spanish speaking.*
- *37% of children in New York City's Head Start programs come from homes where Spanish is the primary language.*

Despite the growing presence of Latinos and ELLs in the public school system, a high proportion of Latino and ELL children are entering kindergarten lacking basic literacy or pre-literacy skills compared to other children. Panelists and participants in the forum cited current studies supporting evidence-based research in early childhood education validating the positive impact of using the child's home language in the classroom as a foundation for learning, school readiness and higher academic achievement. It was also pointed out that more attention has to be given to develop a unified data collection and more research is needed to determine best practices in early care and education.

Besides the challenges faced by Latino and ELL children in early education, Latino families are also coping with other major disadvantages, such as poverty, the lack of access to social services, language barriers, lack of information about quality early care and education programs and other unfavorable socioeconomic factors.

From the standpoint of early education providers, development of a bilingual, culturally competent, and educated workforce is essential in ensuring diverse program options and culturally and linguistically appropriate curricula.

The early care and education system in New York also involves actual coordination among city and state agencies. Presently, the Office of Children and Family Services (OFCS) is piloting a promising Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to assess and improve the level of quality in early care and education settings. The need for a QRIS is one of the key areas being addressed by LCECE so that child care providers and early education programs will have instruments to increase cultural competence, involve parents in the early education process, and make assessments in the children's home languages.

Latino and ELL parents want their children to learn and succeed in school. Latino parents will enroll their children in early education programs if these programs are affordable and accessible. Therefore, more work has to be done to effectively reach out to parents and communities.

The LCECE forum elaborated recommendations, which intend to be a starting point in addressing the needs of Latino and ELLs in early care and education:

- *A unified and more efficient data and information collection system incorporating federal, state, municipal, and city sources must be developed to accurately track Latino children and ELLs and support their early care and education.*
- *High quality early care and education requires an investment in hiring and developing a diverse, linguistically, and culturally competent workforce at all levels.*
- *Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) of early child care and education programs must incorporate cultural aspects that affect learning, language acquisition and cognitive development.*
- *Adequate resources and funding must be available for developmentally, linguistically, and culturally competent programs in early care and education that provide ELLs and Latino children with the skills to succeed in school.*
- *New York State and New York City should use effective outreach strategies focused on Latino and ELL families to create awareness of the availability of high-quality child care and early education programs.*
- *There has to be better coordination among state agencies, city agencies and school districts and between school districts, family day care providers and child care centers.*

Background: Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education

Over the course of 2007-2008, The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. convened a workgroup of early care and education advocates, leaders, and other professionals, in a series of planning meetings to discuss how to bring attention to the needs of Latino and English Language Learner (ELL) children from birth to 5 years of age in the early care and education systems of New York.

The workgroup included Elba Montalvo, Executive Director of The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, Inc. (CHCF); Krystal Reyes and Angelica Velázquez, formerly of CHCF; as well as Maria Beneman, Assistant Commissioner for Head Start of the New York City Administration for Children's Services; Pedro Cordero, Director of Child Development Services, Goddard Riverside Community Center; Luis O. Reyes, Coordinator, Coalition for Educational Excellence for English Language Learners and Jorge Saenz de Viteri, Executive Director of the Bronx Community College Child Development Center. The workgroup decided to form The Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education (LCECE). Its mission is to increase the availability and quality of culturally and linguistically appropriate child care and early education for Latino children and all ELLs at both the city and state level.

The LCECE identified six key issue areas in which to concentrate its efforts. These six areas are based on research and practice in the field that the emerging Coalition identified as pressing issues for Latino children and families in the earliest years of life. The following section describes each of these areas in more detail.

Language Access

The LCECE will work to develop a more comprehensive and efficient data collection and tracking of Latino children and ELLs to ensure that funding streams support their early care and education. The LCECE recognizes that in order to do so, its advocacy efforts need to target state and local agencies. In New York State, various public agencies intersect to deliver the early care and education system including: the New York State Education Department (SED), the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOH), and the New York City Department of Education (DOE). DOH provides oversight for safety and structural quality; SED is responsible for developing statewide policies and regulations that govern the delivery of services to young children; and OCFS is responsible for policies that allow families to access the child care subsidy system.

Opportunities for Professionals in the Field

The LCECE believes that trainings and professional development opportunities for educators and providers who are serving Latino and ELL children will help them serve Latino families in the most culturally, linguistically and developmentally appropriate way. This also involves an increase in the availability of

trainings and courses leading to certification offered in Spanish and languages other than English to reach ELL providers.

According to a report released by the New York City Early Childhood Professional Development Institute only 10% of center directors are Latino.¹ In light of this information, the LCECE is also focusing its efforts to build leadership among Latino early care and education professionals to increase the number of Latino directors in leadership and decision-making roles.

School Readiness

The LCECE advocates for developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate early childhood programs and curricula to ensure that ELLs and Latino children enter kindergarten ready to learn, and with the skills ready to succeed. The need is great given the reality that upon entering kindergarten a higher proportion of Latino children lack basic literacy or pre-literacy skills compared to non-Latino children their age.²

In a recent article in *American Educator*, Professor Claude Goldenberg discusses the major findings of two national reviews of research on the education of English Language Learners- one by the National Literacy Panel, or NLP, the other published by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence, or CREDE. One of the key conclusions is that teaching students to read in their first, or home, language promotes higher levels of reading achievement in English. Goldenberg clarifies that the effects of primary language instruction, normally described as bilingual education, “are modest, but they are real”(16). These effects are reliable and “...have been found with secondary as well as elementary students, and special education as well as general education students” (16). Also, the research reviews indicated that bilingual education helps ELLs become bilingual and bi-literate, conferring many cultural, intellectual, cognitive, vocational, and economic advantages.³ Tabors reviewed the literature and found that bilingual children often have higher levels of academic achievement. He also found that bilingualism can be beneficial for children’s early language and literacy development, for family communication and function, and for children’s feelings of self-worth.⁴

Two rigorous reviews of the existing research by the National Research Council found that using children’s home languages in educational activities can have a positive impact on their English language development and school readiness and can help them learn the academic core curriculum as well.⁴ Because early grade reading scores are predictors of later academic success, high-quality early education

¹ Ochshorn, S. & García, M. *Learning about the Workforce: A Profile of Early Childhood Educators in New York City's Community and School Based Centers*. New York City Early Childhood Professional Development Institute. New York City: 2007

² National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, 2008

³ Goldenburg, C. *Teaching English Language Learners: What the Research Does- and Does Not Say*. *American Educator*, July 2008.

⁴ García, E. & Gonzalez, D.M. *Pre-K and Latinos: The Foundation for Americas Future*. Pre-K Now Research Series, July 2006.

incorporating linguistic and culturally appropriate curricula is essential in ensuring readiness for school and enriching learning experience.

Family Engagement

The LCECE promotes the use of the child's home culture and language in early childhood programs. This involves engaging parents in a meaningful way to participate in their child's education. The LCECE believes that programs that have a specific parent involvement component and that utilize the cultural resources of the family and community contribute positively to a child's educational outcomes.

Quality Rating and Improvement System

The LCECE will work with state and local agencies to ensure that a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for New York State reflects the needs of ELLs and Latino children and of limited English proficient providers. Anne Mitchell, author of *Stair Steps to Quality*, defines a quality rating system as a method to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings.⁵ In New York State, the Office of Children and Family Services will pilot a QRIS in 2009. This system involves several components, including providing incentives for providers, parent education, and additional resources to licensing entities to assist providers in this process.

Community Involvement and Outreach

The LCECE advocates for programs that engage communities in which ELL and Latino children live and that develop materials in languages that community members can understand.

Overview: Latino/ELL Forum on Early Care and Education

To begin highlighting the issues identified above and to garner support for its mission, the members of the Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education decided that it was necessary to convene a public forum. The first LCECE forum took place on June 24, 2008 at Baruch College of the City University of New York (CUNY) in New York City. It brought together local, state, and national researchers, policymakers, administrators and advocates to discuss current research and practice in the field. A second goal was to establish a policy framework in which to carry out the public education and advocacy work of the LCECE.

Through this forum, the LCECE sought to:

- *Inform advocates, policy-makers, elected officials, and other stakeholders about early education issues for Latino and ELL children.*

⁵ Mitchell, A. *Stair Steps to Quality: A Guide for States and Communities Developing Quality Rating Systems for Early Care and Education*. United Way Success By 6, 2005.

- *Advocate for the increased use of research-based policy and best practice methods in early care and education programs.*
- *Increase commitment by a broad range of organizations and agencies to these issues.*
- *Establish the LCECE as a resource for the early care and education community.*
- *Bring stakeholders together to discuss their efforts and solidify their commitment to work together to meet the needs of Latino and ELL children in the early care and education system.*

Introduction: A Latino Perspective on New York’s Early Care and Education System

Elba Montalvo, the Executive Director of The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc., opened the day-long forum by telling the audience about her own experience as an English Language Learner in New York City. She reflected that for the first two years of her education in the United States she was allowed to sleep in class because the teachers did not know how to help or teach her. “I experienced what it felt like to be virtually left out of my own education, even while I was physically present.”



Montalvo also put into historical perspective the struggle for communities to ensure that their children receive a quality education—a basic human right. She mentioned, *Brown v. The Board of Education*, which made segregation in public schools illegal, and also the case of *Lau v. Nichols*, which brought attention and resources to limited English proficient Asian students who were denied their right to a quality education.

The forum received financial support from the National Council of La Raza, The New York State Office of Children and Family Services and New York City Children’s Services. Their support, Montalvo noted, sends a “strong message to the early care and education community— that this event and the issues we will discuss here today are important; and that we have a critical role to play in making sure that all children have a chance at quality early care and education that is culturally, linguistically and developmentally appropriate.”

To lay the framework for the day, Montalvo provided information on New York City Latino and ELL children under 5:

- *32% of children under the age of 5 are Latino.⁶*

⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *American Community Survey Report*. Washington, D.C. 2006.

- *In New York City public schools 15,788 kindergartners are English Language Learners, 68% of whom are Spanish-speaking.*⁷
- *37% of children in city-run Head Start programs come from homes where Spanish is the primary language spoken.*⁸

Despite Latino children's significant and growing presence in early care and early education programs, there is very little data on services, programs, and school readiness activities that they participate in during these early and very important years of their development. To further make the case for investment in early care and education, Montalvo then provided some information on educational outcomes for Latino students from early grades through higher education.

- *In 2006, only 26.2% of current ELL students graduated within four years.*⁷
- *49% of Latino 4th graders (9 year-olds) in New York State scored below the most basic level for reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress or NAEP.*¹⁰
- *In New York City, only half of Latino high school students graduate in four years; this is the lowest of any ethnic group in the City.*¹¹
- *Nationally, Latino students comprise approximately 11% of all students enrolled in higher education.¹² Also, Latinos enroll at lower rates than their similar-aged peers.*¹³

Montalvo closed her remarks by reiterating that “improving outcomes for Latino children cannot begin when children are already well into elementary school; steps need to be made starting from birth through early childhood so they enter school ready to learn, preventing the likelihood that they will fall behind without this good start.”

She continued by reminding the audience that they all had an obligation to make sure that children are given a chance at a quality education that values their culture and their communities and helps them reach their full potential.

⁷ New York City DOE Office of English Language Learners. *New York City's English Language Learners: Demographics and Performance*, Summer 2007.

⁸ New York City Administration for Children's Services. *Head Start Program Information Report*, 2007.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). *The Nations Report Card: State Snapshot Reading 2007*. <<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/stt2007/2007497NY4.pdf>>

¹¹ New York City DOE. *Summary of New York City Class of 2006 Graduation Rates*, May 2007.

¹² Santiago, D.A. *Voices: A Profile of Today's Latino College Students*, Excelencia in Education. October 2007.

¹³ Ibid.

“The Secret is Out: I am a Bilingual and Bicultural Person”

Commissioner of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), Gladys Carrión, Esq., began her opening remarks in Spanish. She sent a strong message to the audience that she is a bilingual and bicultural person and proud to say so. It is a value that she lives by and has passed on to her children. She commented, “Cultural diversity was embraced and nurtured. Every family deserves as much- native language and cultural diversity.”



Commissioner Carrión stated: "Every child deserves to have access to an early care system that builds on the child's assets of language and culture." This is especially important in New York City where one out of every three children is Latino. Carrión acknowledged the timeliness of the formation of LCECE to ensure there is an organized voice for cultural proficiency in early education and also to ensure that more than 50% of Latino children will stay in school and graduate.

Carrión asserted that OCFS is working hard to listen and to incorporate the voices of advocates. She stated: "If we continue to work together, maybe we can change some of the statistics; maybe fewer will be involved in the child welfare system (one-quarter of children in foster care in the State are Latino, one-third in New York City)".^{14 15}

Among OCFS's initiatives are: translating materials into Spanish, offering training in Spanish through the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany, multilingual training in CPR and First Aid, and launching the Babies Sleep Safest Alone Campaign.

First Panel: A National Perspective on Latinos and ELLs in Early Care and Education

The first panel brought together representatives of three national organizations to discuss current research in the field of early childhood education from a national perspective as well as the various state and national policies, initiatives, and collaborations currently underway to address the needs of Latino and ELL children in the earliest years of life.

¹⁴ New York City Administration for Children Services. *Child Welfare and NYC's Hispanic Community*, April 2007

¹⁵ New York State Office of Children and Family Services, Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Development. *2006 Monitoring and Analysis Profiles With Selected Trend Data: 2002-2006, 2006.*

Erika Beltrán, Education Policy Analyst from the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), opened up the panel and discussed NCLR's 2007 report, *Buenos Principios: Latino Children in the Earliest Years of Life*. Beltrán pointed out that the number of Latino children will continue to increase while the number of White and Black children will remain steady.



Here are some of the data she highlighted:

- *Of Latino children ages 0 to 6, 97% were born in the U.S. and are therefore U.S. citizens.*
- *Of Latino children 0 to 2 years, 67% are living at or below 200% of the Federal poverty level.*
- *17.2% of Latino children compared to 10.9% of White children are uninsured. The percentage is even higher for Latino children born in immigrant families.*
- *White children have access to over twice as many books as Latino children and are twice as likely to be read to.*¹⁶

Beltrán provided data on Latino infants, toddlers and also on Latino parents. Nearly half of Latino children's mothers have not completed high school. Half of Latino children live with parents who are married and half live in single-parent homes. Most Latino parents are employed, and over two-thirds depend on themselves or a family member to take care of their young children.

Beltrán closed her presentation by listing the two major challenges facing Latino parents and families: the lack of access to social services and the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate practices by early care and education providers. Echoing the challenges presented by Elba Montalvo, she underscored the lack of data collection and the need for more research on best practices in early care and education.

NCLR supports policy solutions that include essential social services that will help families including:

- *Even Start*
- *Early Head Start*
- *State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)*
- *Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)*

¹⁶ National Council of La Raza. *Buenos Principios: Latino Children in the Earliest Years of Life*, 2007.

Pre-K Now's Deputy State Policy Director, Danielle Gonzales, continued the discussion on Latino children by discussing data on three and four year olds. Gonzales cited data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), which found that Latinos enroll in Pre-K programs at rates consistently lower than White and Black children.¹⁵ Gonzales then provided school readiness information available from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K, 2000) highlighting that upon entering kindergarten, Hispanic children: ¹⁶



- Have lower assessment scores in reading and mathematics than other children.
- Are less likely to have been read a book.
- Are less likely to recognize most letters of the alphabet, count up to 20, and write or draw.
- From middle and high socio-economic status backgrounds are also behind Whites.
- The difference in skills between Latino children and their peers appears when children enter kindergarten and only widens as they grow older.

Gonzales also provided information from the 2006 report she co-authored with Dr. Eugene Garcia of Arizona State University.¹⁷ One myth that many people believe about Latino parents is that they do not want to place their children in Pre-K programs. Gonzales provided information from a national poll of Hispanic adults that found the opposite to be true: 96% of Hispanic parents said early childhood is important to them. The pollsters also found that the most common reason Hispanic parents do not enroll their children in Pre-K (33%) is the lack of knowledge about programs in their area. ¹⁸

Lastly, Gonzales discussed other myths surrounding language acquisition, citing research that says native language acquisition is a foundation for second language acquisition and highlighting that bilingual children “demonstrate higher levels of mental flexibility and cognitive abilities compared to monolingual children.” ¹⁹

Gonzales ended with several policy recommendations:

- *Provide additional funding and priority to programs that serve ELLs.*
- *Provide guidance on immigrant eligibility and enrollment requirements to child care and early education providers and other front-line service providers.*
- *Allow for diverse delivery: community-based providers, varying durations.*

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Education, NCES. *National Household Surveys Program (NHES)*, “Parent Interview” survey, 2001.

¹⁶ NCES, The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K). *America’s Kindergartners*, February 2000.

¹⁷ Garcia, E.E. & Gonzalez D.M. *Pre-K and Latinos: The Foundation for America’s Future*. Pre-K Now Research Series. July 2006.

¹⁸ Zarate, M.E. & Perez, P. *Latino Public Opinion Survey of Pre-Kindergarten Programs: Knowledge, Preferences, and Public Support*, Los Angeles: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, 2006.

¹⁹ Garcia, O.; Kleifgen, J.; & Flachi, L. *From English Learners to Emergent Bilinguals*, 2008.

- *Provide developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate curricula.*
- *Provide instructional support in first language.*
- *Assure a diverse, well-prepared, bilingual workforce (scholarships, release time, improved salaries).*
- *Use effective outreach strategies that target Latinos and enhance awareness in Latino and immigrant communities (radio, church newsletters, and community events).*
- *Align curricula, instruction and assessment for ages 3 through 8.*
- *Provide meaningful family engagement activities.*
- *Build an evaluation and data collection system to contribute to the research base on young ELLs.*

Helen Blank, the Director of Leadership and Public Policy at The National Women's Law Center (NWLC), presented a slightly different perspective on Pre-K. Her report, *A Center Piece of the Pre-K Puzzle: Providing State Pre-Kindergarten in Child Care Centers*, focused on the financial and organizational challenges that programs face.²⁰ She emphasized the need to value Latino communities and support their families. A basic way is by supporting community-based Pre-K programs that have the capability to reach Latino families.



But despite being in a better position to respond to the needs of communities, community based organizations (CBOs) receive less funding than school-based programs. In order for early care and education centers to provide high-quality programs, they need well-compensated teachers, and help with capacity-building to be able to plan ahead, budget and fundraise.

Blank also noted that in order to provide early education programs and services, various collaborations among agencies need to occur, particularly among state agencies, between state agencies and school districts, and between school districts and child care centers.

She elaborated on the various areas around which close coordination between school districts and child care centers can occur:

- *Allocating Pre-Kindergarten slots*
- *Enrolling children*

²⁰ Schulman K. & Blank, H. *A Center Piece of the Pre K Puzzle: Providing State Pre-Kindergarten in Child Care Centers*, National Women's Law Center, 2007.

- *Providing ongoing teacher training*
- *Serving children with special needs*
- *Helping children make successful transitions from Pre-Kindergarten to kindergarten*
- *Educating each other on the importance and roles of both Pre-Kindergarten and child care*

Blank concluded by walking the audience through the six key issues that center directors face, according to their interviews for the NWLC report. Blank listed the following challenges and opportunities:

- *Financing*
- *Qualifications and compensation for teachers, directors and other staff*
- *Relationships with school districts*
- *Curriculum, assessment, and other programming issues*
- *Community planning and collaboration*
- *Center wide impact of providing Pre-Kindergarten*

Second Panel: Early Care and Education Advocacy in New York

Panelists provided an overview of activities that advocate groups in New York are engaged in to ensure that Latino and ELL children receive the services and support they need in early care and education. Panelists described their involvement and participation in city and state government workgroups, research and advocacy, and coalition building and organizing to achieve their goals.

Luis O. Reyes, Coordinator of the Coalition for Educational Excellence for English Language Learners or CEEELL, began his remarks commenting on Erika Beltrán's presentation, *Buenos Principios*. "Not only does *buenos principios* mean good beginnings in Spanish, it also means good principles," Reyes pointed out. They are principles that are based on adding to, not subtracting, from a child's identity.



He also framed his remarks around the historical but incorrect axiom that the United States is a 'melting pot.' "I still haven't melted," Reyes commented. "We have stopped buying into that vision... because it means we have to give something up. What didn't work 100 years ago does not work now; giving up language and culture can not be the paradigm." This multicultural and culturally competent view is what guides Reyes's work around English Language Learners in New York City.

In December 2005, the New York State Board of Regents, the state's highest educational policymaking body, approved an Early Childhood Education Policy Statement in favor of high quality early childhood education for all children from birth through grade four. In preparation for the Regents vote, Reyes had convened an ELL early childhood education working group through CEEELL. The approved Regents Statement included language about meeting the needs of ELL students; many of the group's comments and recommendations were included in the final eleven components for implementing the Regents policy.

More recently, Reyes authored and submitted to State Education Commissioner Richard Mills a set of ELL Recommendations for Commissioner's Pre-K Regulations on behalf of early childhood professionals and advocates for ELL/immigrant students. This document was signed by the leaders of 21 other institutions and associations in New York City and New York State, including The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families. One key recommendation is to encourage family partnerships with CBOs and other not-for-profit organizations that do outreach to parents and provide multiple services to immigrant and/or language minority families and communities.²¹

Another recent victory involves the addition of model programs serving ELL students as one of six allowable categories for the use of additional state school aid provided through the Contracts for Excellence (C4E). C4E is an initiative that flowed from the historic infusion of funds to schools in New York City and other high-needs school districts as a result of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) settlement. The State Education Commissioner's Regulations governing the use of C4E funds stipulate that programs paid for with C4E funds could include "high-quality Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs (UPKs) that incorporate both English and a student's native language, and necessary professional development to teachers and staff to effectively conduct a multilingual program..."²²

Reyes also spoke about the need to value and encourage the use of the home language of a child in the classroom. Assessments in pre-school programs should be culturally and linguistically appropriate. "If they are bilingual students, they should be assessed bilingually." Researchers agree that early childhood assessments need to be culturally and linguistically appropriate, given that a child's home language is a crucial foundation for cognitive development, learning about the world, and emerging literacy. Buysee *et al.*, recommend assessing children in both languages and suggest guidelines that include considering cultural aspects that affect how children learn and relate, understanding each child's linguistic background, and using a variety of procedures to gather information about a child's language.²³

²¹ Reyes, L. Ph.D. *ELL Recommendations for Commissioner's Pre-K Regulations*. On Behalf of Early Childhood Professionals and Advocates for ELL/Immigrant Students. October 15, 2007.

²² <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/mgtserv/C4E/home.shtml>

²³ Buysse, V.; Castro, D.; West, T.; & Skinner, M. *Addressing the Needs of Latino Children: A National Survey of State Administrators of Early Childhood Programs*. Executive Summary. Chapel: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute, 2004.

Advocacy from a provider's perspective was presented by **Jorge Saenz de Viteri, Executive Director of the Bronx Community College Child Development Center**. The center he directs is one of 19 centers that are funded through money from the City University of New York (CUNY) subsidized system. In fiscal year 2009, New York State will allocate \$7.44M to serve the children of low-income college students attending four-year programs in the CUNY and SUNY (outside New York City) systems.²⁴



Saenz de Viteri spoke of the need for a unified system of early care and education that values all modalities and in many different settings, in both the public and private sectors, including family care, center-based or school-based programs. “Investment in UPK is going up while everything else is going down.” This echoes what Helen Blank presented during the morning panel on the financial disparities in professional preparation, experience and compensation between community-based and school-based programs. Other challenges faced by the parents of Latino and ELL children, especially immigrant parents, are the lack of information about various program options and of a simplified way of accessing child care programs. Many immigrant parents fear that filling out applications might put undocumented immigrant family members at risk of deportation.

Saenz de Viteri closed his remarks by reminding the attendees that it is “our responsibility to educate the community and parents.” He recommended making public and private investments in educating stakeholders, both providers and parents. He urged advocates and providers to sign up to list-serves to gain new tools to educate the community. His point about parent education was well received. This was indicated by forum evaluations that showed that the largest percentage of attendees (32%) planned to disseminate information received at the forum with the communities they serve.

Child care providers and parents, along with ELL/immigrant advocates, have available to them a number of web resources such as Colorin Colorado, a research-based website for ELLs' teachers and parents on teaching ELLs to read.²⁵ They can also participate in early literacy activities such as Scholastic's, Verizon and NCLR's “*Lee y Serás*” (*Read and You Will Be*) Initiative that empowers and engages parents and communities to foster literacy development in both Spanish and English.²⁶

²⁴ New York State Division of the Budget. *Higher Education*. <http://publications.budget.state.ny.us/eBudget0809/fy0809littlebook/HigherEducation.html>

²⁵ <http://www.colorincolorado.org/>

²⁶ http://www.lee_y_seras.net/

Vanessa Leung, Deputy Director of the Coalition for Asian American Children

and Families (CACF), wrapped up the panel with a presentation on the findings from a report, *Breaking Down Barriers: Immigrant Families and Early Childhood Education in New York City*, recently released by CACF. In preparation for the report, Leung and her co-author, Rasmia Kirmani, conducted interviews with child care advocates, immigrant advocates, researchers and service providers to get some of their findings. They also held focus groups and conducted surveys with parents from New York City's largest and fastest growing immigrant communities including: Bangladeshi, Chinese, Dominican, Haitian, Korean, and Russian.²⁷



Leung and Kirmani found that immigrant families with children between ages 3 to 5 were most likely to be in informal child care situations or unlicensed or unregulated child care arrangements. Leung also provided some baseline information on the immigrant populations in New York City. According to recent census information, 36% of New York City's population is foreign born and 54% of young New Yorkers live in immigrant families. Also, families and individuals who migrate to New York come from nearly 200 countries.²⁸

The purpose of the study was to understand the strengths and challenges that immigrant families face in trying to access early childhood education programs. She noted that immigrant issues are not necessarily the same as ELL issues. Key findings from the *Breaking Down Barriers* (2008) report included:

- *Lack of appropriately translated and culturally sensitive materials and child care professionals.*
- *Not enough effective outreach and language access to immigrant communities about programs and services available to them.*
- *Not enough training for child care professionals to educate them on the unique challenges facing immigrant families and children.*
- *High costs associated with child care programs and the lack of funding to agencies to develop new and maintain current child care programs and facilities.*
- *Ineffective government response to the needs facing immigrant families and children.*

Leung concluded her presentation with CACF's five recommendations to help improve immigrant access to early care and education programs.

- *Improve language assistance services and increase cultural competency of child care program staff.*

²⁷ Kirmani, R. & Leung V. *Breaking Down Barriers: Immigrant Families and Early Childhood Education in New York City*. The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, May 2008.

²⁸ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey Report*. Washington, D.C. 2007.

- *Increase language-accessible communication with immigrant communities throughout New York City, making them aware of available child care programs and services.*
- *Ensure child care providers are knowledgeable of and can address the unique needs and challenges facing immigrant communities, families, and children in accessing child care services.*
- *Increase funding to city agencies and child care networks so that there are enough early childhood education programs and staff to address New York City's growing immigrant populations.*
- *Conduct an early childhood education needs assessment of New York's immigrant communities and use the data to improve programs, increase outreach, and implement language assistance services.*

Leung noted the importance of three key activities required of providers and education professionals: advocacy, language assistance and outreach to parents and communities to increase their social capital about both program options and the benefits of early child care and education.

Third Panel: City and State Government: The Early Care and Education System

The early care and education system in New York involves coordination among various city and state agencies. Panelists discussed what their respective government agencies are doing to address the needs of Latinos and ELLs in early childhood programs in New York.

Janice Molnar, Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Children and Family Services

(OCFS), began her remarks by acknowledging that meeting the needs of a huge and diverse community like the Latino community is a big endeavor. Molnar indicated that OCFS implements various strategies to address the needs of Latinos including translating child care forms and training manuals, providing targeted subsidy support to migrant workers, and focusing on cultural competence.



Molnar also remarked that half a million dollars in Educational Incentive Program (EIP) funds were awarded to child care providers and center staff for English language learning, literacy or ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) classes. EIP funds are state dollars that are administered through the State University of New York (SUNY) to help low-income child care providers and center staff access professional development opportunities such as workshops, trainings, and relevant college courses to ele-

vate the quality of their work.²⁹ Molnar also mentioned that 20% of the health and safety trainers are certified to train in Spanish. In addition, OCFS conducts its market rate survey in Spanish as well as in English. This survey is used to determine the amount a provider will be paid to take care of a child who has subsidized child care. According to the report by the Center for Law and Social Policy, New York is one of two states in the country that translates its market rate survey into a language other than English.³⁰

The core mission of OCFS is to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children. Its main responsibilities include regulating and promoting the supply of child care providers. Currently, OCFS regulates 20,000 providers across the state, 14% of whom are Latino. Latino children make up 30% of children in New York City. Molnar reaffirmed Commissioner Carrion's commitment to quality services in addition to health and safety, and said that the biggest opportunity to make an impact in this regard is through a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The QRIS is a method to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and educational settings. This system involves several components, including providing incentives for providers, parent education, and additional resources to licensing entities to assist providers in this process. OCFS is piloting a QRIS in 2009.³¹

In New York State, a QRIS will be based on four domains: 1) learning environment, 2) family engagement, 3) qualification and experience, and 4) leadership and management. Molnar explained that these domains are above and beyond state regulations. "Our core mission remains health and well-being; the quality agenda is beyond that."

Lastly, Molnar specifically mentioned the link between the Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education and a QRIS. "QRIS is part of the platform for LCECE. The goals of the LCECE need to be integrated." Programs and providers will get points for staff participating in a program to increase cultural competence and for translating materials into children's home languages. If 10% of the children speak another language, then at least one staff member will speak that language. Molnar indicated that a list of the quality standards is available at www.earlychildhood.org.

Although New York has done more than other states to translate child care applications and other materials into other languages, Molnar stated that translating materials is a "drop in the bucket". She outlined other pressing challenges that need to be addressed in order to better serve Latino families:

- *The lack of sufficient bilingual/bicultural staff within a civil service environment, where people are hired off lists. The upstate regional offices see this as a huge need and she is encouraging them to develop a network.*

²⁹ Care and Development Fund for FY 2008-2009.

<http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/beccs/stateplan/state%20child%20care%20and%20development%20plan%202008-2009.pdf>

³⁰ Ewen, D.; Nelson, A.; & Matthews, H. *CCFBG State Plan Reported Activities to Support Limited English Proficient (LEP) and Immigrant Communities*. The Center for Law and Social Policy, 2008.

³¹ Mitchell, A. *Stair Steps to Quality: A Guide for States and Communities Developing Quality Rating Systems for Early Care and Education*. United Way Success By 6, 2005.

- *The need for more diverse and intensive professional development.*
- *The need for culturally and linguistically appropriate methods of assessing our children's performance.*

The next steps for OCFS include looking at best practices in cultural competency. "Our goal is to infuse our programs with a culturally competent view of the world."

Manuel Rivera, Deputy Secretary for Education of the State of New York,

opened his remarks by describing his role in the governor's cabinet as one of influencing policy, shaping the policy that comes from the Governor's office and then influencing the state budget. That is so because in New York State, the Board of Regents sets education policy; the Education Commissioner and the State Education Department are responsible for implementation and enforcement of educational policies and regulations as well as of state laws.



Framing his remarks in the broader context of a sustainable and fiscally sound economy, Rivera said, "The economic development of New York begins with our young people, from the time they are born...We have to get it right from the beginning."

Manuel Rivera also mentioned the Contracts for Excellence (C4E) [see table #1]. These contracts regulate the increase in school funding acquired through the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit.³² Local school districts, including New York City, with many poor students and ELLs would be required to show how this new aid is improving the quality of their programs and schools. Over \$700M in new aid was meant to go to ELLs.³³ Rivera pointed out however, that "...it's a year later and we have yet to see any comprehensive evaluation... There is no reason we shouldn't be able to see if that money reached the population it was intended to." Model programs for English Language Learners are one of six categories that CFE dollars must be used for; the other five include class size reduction, time on task, teaching and principal quality initiatives, middle and high school restructuring, and full day Pre-K programs.

The following remarks made by Rivera focused specifically on the growing number of ELLs in New York school districts: "We as a state must pay attention to ELLs and pay attention to the needs of children from the time they are born and make sure they have quality pre-school programs. If not," he continued, "We will have more and more students coming up through the grades who are not prepared."

Rivera outlined four of Governor David Paterson's priorities regarding education. First, assure early grade success and greater access for all 3 and 4 year olds. Rivera said that this involves collecting information in a statewide database about who is getting served, and who is not. It also involves engaging in more effective outreach to parents and improved staff training in cultural competency. It requires engaging with

³² Contracts for Excellence. <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/mgtserv/C4E/home.shtml>

³³ New York State Division of the Budget. *Expanding Educational Opportunity*
<http://publications.budget.state.ny.us/eBudget0809/fy0809littlebook/EducationSchoolAid.html>

parents of newborn children so that they help in fostering children’s language and social development early on.

Second, eliminate inappropriate referrals to special education. Rivera noted that there are too many K-2nd grade children who are being inappropriately diagnosed and referred to special education because teachers lack the skills or training to meet the needs of these students. “We have to eliminate the notion of early grade failure,” Rivera commented. “To accomplish this goal, there have to be programs and services in schools where children can learn.”

Third, increase accountability based on benchmarks for graduation and closing the achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL students. State officials need to set these benchmarks for the next 3, 5 and 10 years. Beyond just reporting student reading and math scores is the need to track the services that students are receiving, including the nature of school environments and the health-related support that students receive.

The fourth and last priority that Rivera mentioned was adult education. There are too many waiting lists for GED courses, ESOL and others. Among possible actions is enrolling more young adults, some of whom are parents of young children, in community colleges. Rivera emphasized the need to work within the existing structure of the State Governor’s Children’s Cabinet to meet this unfulfilled need.

In his closing remarks, Rivera called on participants to form coalitions in the state legislature and elsewhere to get these types of policies in place within the next 4-5 months. Rivera’s final remarks were, “we need to monitor, monitor, track, track.”

Table #1. Contracts for Excellence

<p style="text-align: center;">Funds must support specific program initiatives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Class size reduction 2. Time on task 3. Teacher and principle quality initiatives 4. Middle and high school restructuring 5. Full day Pre-K programs 6. Model program for English Language Learners 	<p style="text-align: center;">Funds must go to students with the greatest educational need:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. English Language Learners 2. Students in poverty 3. Students with disabilities 4. Students with low academic achievement or at risk of dropping out
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Maria Benejan, Assistant Commissioner for Head Start of the New York City Administration for Children's Services, Child Care-Head Start (ACS), followed with a detailed presentation on the various efforts her agency is engaged to address the specific needs of Latino families and ELLs.



ACS provides child care services to approximately 93,000 children, age 0 to 5. About 40% of these children speak a language other than English; 27% speak Spanish. Head Start is mandated by the federal government to hire staff that is familiar with the cultural backgrounds of the children in the programs. About 43% of Head Start staff identifies as Latino and about 59% are proficient in a language other than English.

One of the challenges that ACS faces is what to do when a new language group emerges in a community. Benejan gave the example of a center in Bensonhurst where 18 different languages are spoken. She commented that cooperation with institutions of higher education would help overcome this challenge with the creation of more bilingual/dual language programs and by having student teachers placed in ACS settings. She also stated that support from foundations who could offer scholarships to professionals in the field would help as well.

ACS faces the challenge of being able to predict and prepare for demographic changes in New York City neighborhoods. Benejan then detailed various ACS efforts to do just this. As a way of instituting research-based programs and practice in its centers and trainings, ACS has joined with New York University in a research initiative to find out how Latinos define parent involvement and what their values, expectations and goals are in this regard.³⁴ ACS plans to use research-based strategies to work more effectively with families. The information from this study will also help improve marketing and recruitment strategies to enroll more families in child care programs.

In addition, ACS also translates all enrollment forms into Spanish; but, Benejan noted that even this simple task comes with challenges. At times, phrases or words can mean very different things to speakers from different countries or regions. In the near future, ACS's twelve local offices will be equipped with language lines that will offer telephonic translation.

Training and technical assistance for Head Start staff is a priority as well. One early literacy curriculum that is being implemented in programs is called "Lee y Serás." "Lee y Serás" is a culturally-based program in Spanish and English that shows parents and providers how to use the home language with their young children to help them gain early literacy skills.³⁵ Benejan also has begun working with researcher

³⁴ McWayne, C. & Melzi, G. *Developing a Parent-Derived Measure of Latino Family Involvement*, New York University, in progress.

³⁵ <http://www.leeyseras.net/>

Linda Espinoza on best approaches for language acquisition. Espinoza is the author of *Challenging Common Myths about Young English Language Learners (2008)*. See Table #2 for seven findings from her report based on current research and practice.

An issue that was of interest to audience members was assessments; 24% of audience members indicated that they would like to learn more about curricula and assessments. Currently, child care centers utilize the Program Assessment Instrument (PAI) and Head Start centers use PRISM. Both of these assessment tools include indicators of cultural competency. Lastly, Benejan spoke of a broad-based ELL Workgroup that she instituted that is comprised of researchers, professionals in the field, program directors, and agency staff. This group is charged with collaborating and providing recommendations and strategies on how best to serve ELLs in both Head Start and child care programs.

Table #2. Research-based conclusions on young English Language Learners³⁶

- 1. All young children are capable of learning two languages. Becoming bilingual has long-term cognitive, academic, social, cultural, and economic benefits. Bilingualism is an asset.**
- 2. Young ELL students require systematic support for the continued development of their home language.**
- 3. Loss of the home language has potential negative long-term consequences for the ELL child's academic, social, and emotional development, as well as for the family dynamics.**
- 4. Teachers and programs can adopt effective strategies to support home language development even when the teachers are monolingual English speakers.**
- 5. Dual language programs are an effective approach to improving academic achievement for ELL children while also providing benefits to native English speakers.**
- 6. Hispanic Spanish-speaking children enter kindergarten with many social strengths that are the result of positive parenting practices that need to be acknowledged and enhanced.**
- 7. Hispanic parents value high-quality early education and will enroll their young children if programs are affordable and accessible.**

Source: Espinoza, Linda M. *Challenging Common Myths About Young English Language Learners*. Foundation for Child Development. FCD Policy Brief. January 2008.

³⁶ Espinoza, L.M. *Challenging Common Myths About Young English Language Learners*. Foundation for Child Development. FCD Policy Brief. Advancing PK-3, January 2008.

Providing information from the New York State Education Department, **Pedro Ruiz, the Coordinator of the Office of Bilingual Education (OBE) for the New York State Education Department (SED)**, began his remarks underscoring the importance of data collection. According to Ruiz, there are statistics that indicate that 26% of Latino children in New York State and 42% in New York City are enrolled in Pre-K programs. According to Ruiz, it is very important "...how the information is collected, so we can make solid decisions" so that we can request appropriate allocations in the state budget for programs and services.



For example, school districts across the state report that there are over 220,000 ELLs in New York from kindergarten to grade 12. However, only 195,000 of these ELL students generate state school aid, a discrepancy that needs to be accounted for. Like Rivera, Ruiz called for a unified data system to combine information from various federal, state and local sources.

There has been an increased focus on Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) since the New York State Board of Regents approved a new Regents Policy Statement on early education at the end of 2005. Ruiz works closely with the SED Office of Early Childhood Education to develop Reading First guidelines for ELLs in K-3 grades. Both offices, in conjunction with others in SED, are looking to develop Pre-K guidelines for the federal Reading First program. Ruiz also underscored the need for translation of materials for parents as well as the need for more trained, bilingual staff in Pre-K programs and child care centers. Currently, 165 different languages are spoken by ELL children in New York City.

Ruiz also discussed the issue of Pre-K assessment in the context that state law and Commissioner's Regulation (Part 154) only apply to K-12 grades. This raises the question of whether K-12 assessments such as the Language Aptitude Battery-Revised (LABR), used for initial determination of ELL status, and the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) are developmentally appropriate for children in Pre-K programs. Currently, there is no state mandate for providing Pre-K programs, and therefore, no mandate regarding ELL instruction. While there is no separate Pre-K state assessment, SED is discussing whether or not to develop one. The question of Pre-K assessment in state-funded UPK programs raises the issue of what assessments to require or use in non-state funded programs, including center-based programs subsidized through other state agencies such as OCFS and how they fit into the delivery system. The last concern Ruiz brought up with respect to developing assessments was the issue of funding. He commented, "With a mandate comes funding obligations."

The C4E mandates what education funds can be used for. It is important to note that Pre-Kindergarten programs are included in this funding. Ruiz is working closely with other offices to align English Language Arts (ELA), English as a Second Language (ESL) and Native Language Arts (NLA) standards. English Language Learners are the responsibility of every office, Ruiz highlighted, "We have to make sure we collaborate." Some of the technical assistance to school practitioners is provided through the Bilingual

Education Technical Assistance Centers or BETACS, funded by SED. They provide training and support to professionals in the field, to schools, to parents, and to students. In New York City, there are three regional BETACS and three language specific BETACS. For information on the locations of New York State BETACS, see Appendix C.

The last speaker on the government panel was **Maria Santos, Executive Director of the Office of English Language Learners (OELL) in the New York City Department of Education (DOE)**. Her office falls under the purview of The Office of Teaching and Learning, which also includes early childhood programs. Santos addressed the issues and challenges faced by her office.



One key priority is for ELL students to have access to a core curriculum that is robust and rigorous. In conversations with the early childhood unit, Santos has been looking at what professional development opportunities will be made available to that community and what sort of native language support will be provided. The DOE has invested significant resources in native language resources and has provided instructional materials for native language instruction for grades K through 12. In addition to this technical support, the DOE has also provided classroom libraries to schools in the eight dominant languages spoken by New York City's ELL students. They are looking to provide these materials in Pre-K programs to increase alignment among programs.

Santos informed the participants about the DOE's in-depth review and revision of the 4-year old Language Allocation Policy (LAP). The LAP was started as a system-wide initiative to look into how each school was using language (English and ELLs' native languages) in their schools. The DOE wanted to know how transitional bilingual programs, ESL and dual-language programs were defined by schools and how much English or native languages were used in instruction and for what purposes. Santos believes that looking at all these programs will help build a more coherent and robust system. This in-depth review of each school's LAP is now part of their school comprehensive education plan. This gives schools the ability to look at their student data and the services they are providing their students. Santos mentioned that Pre-K programs had not been part of these discussions in the past.

Going forward, OELL will look closely at ELL students' countries of origin and what language groups they represent. Where there are 15 or more students from the same language group, schools will be required to form classrooms and have home language support. The DOE is looking at providers that would be able to provide support and technical assistance to schools. This initiative will be implemented in the 2009-2010 school year.

Santos also spoke of the need to collaborate closely with school communities and community-based programs to look at what is offered to children before they come to kindergarten. "Children need programs that are coherent pathways to kindergarten." Currently, 53,000 children receive Pre-K services in com-

munity-based settings and that represents about 3/5 of students in Pre-K programs. About 61% are English-speaking dominant and about 34% are Latino children. In Pre-K settings, Santos explained, the Home Language Survey is used to help programs understand who the children are in their programs. The Home Language Survey can help schools and programs know the dominant language of a child's home environment, but it does not help determine a child's level of English language proficiency. There is no way for the DOE to say with confidence that a child is an English Language Learner at the Pre-K level. There is a need for determining this in a way that is sound and useful.

Santos then explained the two parallel support structures that are in place for both school-based programs and community-based programs. School Pre-K programs receive support through the school support organizations (SSO), which have specialists with Pre-K backgrounds. Community-based organizations receive technical assistance through a central DOE office with five borough directors and five instructional directors, who oversee 56 instructional coordinators. These coordinators are each assigned 12-14 programs and conduct site visits to them regularly.

In New York City, Santos noted, "We could have many more students engaging in the early childhood programs." As is the case across the state, there is limited funding and high need. In order to increase enrollment, the DOE needs to get a better sense of the communities that need the services. Santos cited that UPK is a 2 ½ hour program, but that time-frame limits the number and type of parents that can take advantage of this early education program. Like presenters before her, Santos mentioned the need for better data collection. "It's hard to tell the stories of these communities and what their needs are without the right tools for gathering data," Santos said.

Space is another issue that inhibits service provision. Space is impacting high-need communities with regards to child care service. In areas that are very dense, this is a very big issue. Santos also believes that it is important that incentives and partnerships exist with institutions of higher education to bolster the quality of provider services.

Closing Remarks

Pedro Cordero, the Director of Child Development Services at Goddard Riverside Community Center and a member of the Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education (LCECE), closed the forum with a summary of the day's discussions and a call to action. He noted the caliber of the presenters. He stated "that the issues highlighted today merit attention at different levels of government and that clear policies with funding are needed to guide our practice for serving children that are English Language Learners."



He expressed to the audience that, "We need to exit this forum with a renewed commitment regarding our practices and with an energized focus on our advocacy for revenue that supports best practice models." Asking the audience and leadership to be introspective and examine their own work, he said, "Proceed to your offices and classroom and assess what is in place— what needs to change— and develop strategies on how to make it happen. Ask the question: Are we culturally responsive to our constituents— our families, our communities? One thing is certain— you can start on a small scale level and be successful."

Cordero also pointed out the limited resources devoted to Latino and ELL children. "Children cannot be shortchanged," he said. Stakeholders need to acknowledge that the work on behalf of ELLs has begun. However, although the issues have received attention, there has not been a corresponding increase in dedicated spending levels.

Cordero also recommended to family day care provider networks, school districts, pre-schools, and Head Start programs to include the needs of ELLs in professional development days and to engage Latino and immigrant families through school parent coordinators and center-based family service employees. Asserting that we have the "vehicles, the presence of constituents and the expertise," Pedro Cordero proudly stated that "collectively, we can make some noise to influence the political will."

Trying the day's themes into one, Cordero commented that "Our educational system can only become strengthened when our pre-schoolers attend school more prepared to learn, when adequate funding becomes available to support children's programs, staff development and parent engagement. In a nutshell, we must strengthen our early care and educational systems by respecting the multi-cultural strengths of our communities."

Recommendations

Forum participants stated clearly and unambiguously to child care and early education stakeholders that Latino children and ELLs must have affordable, quality early care and education that is linguistically, culturally and developmentally appropriate. As a result of the Forum's discussion and its call to action, the following recommendations were made in these areas.

Recommendation #1: A unified and more efficient data and information collection system incorporating federal, state, municipal, and city sources must be developed to accurately track Latino children and ELLs and support their early care and education.

Government at all levels must do a better job in collecting data and identifying Latino, in particular, and English Language Learners (ELLs), in general. ELL children come from homes where a language other than English is spoken, including Spanish speaking Latinos (67.6%). At the moment, there is no reliable count of the number of 3 and 4-year old children in New York disaggregated by race, ethnicity and English language proficiency. The Home Language Survey, used in public schools, from kindergarten to 12th grade, can help schools and childcare programs know the dominant language of a child's home environment. However, it does not help determine a child's level of English language proficiency.

Data collection methods and procedures vary and there has to be consistency in reporting and in accounting for Latino and ELL children. Latino children and ELLs are a fast growing population, and the number of ELL students is increasing in the public school K-12 population. Therefore, discrepancies in reporting should be resolved in order to provide the necessary educational supports in early care and education and contribute to research based in the young ELLs.

Recommendation #2: High quality early care and education requires an investment in hiring and developing a diverse, linguistically, and culturally competent workforce at all levels.

The early care and education workforce must be equipped with the knowledge, skills and experience to provide culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate education for all children. The workforce should be diverse, multilingual and well prepared to meet the linguistic and cultural needs of Latino and ELL children and parents. The research literature is clear about the beneficial effect of having culturally competent and linguistically appropriate staff and programs. Positive effects include better outreach to families; knowledge of the social, emotional and cognitive skills of these children; appropriate assessment of the language proficiencies of children who are naturally acquiring two languages in their home and the larger society; identification of health needs and potential disabilities; and dual language acquisition in programs that are reflective of community and support the home language so that early literacy can be fostered in the home as well as at school.

Early care providers need to be supported with technical assistance and professional development opportunities to create the best curricula for Latino and ELL children. Moreover, these professional opportunities should be available in languages other than English to lead to providers' licensing.

Furthermore, higher education institutions should offer majors in education that better meet the language needs of emerging communities. Scholarships should be available to increase the number of educators and develop a diverse, linguistically, and culturally competent leadership.

Recommendation # 3: Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) of early child care and education programs must incorporate cultural aspects that affect learning, language acquisition, and cognitive development.

In New York State, a QRIS is being piloted by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) based in four categories: learning environment, family engagement, qualifications and experience, and leadership and management. New York State has made progress in developing quality standards for early childhood programs. However, it is essential that the rating system incorporate linguistically and culturally appropriate aspects in all four QRIS categories, which ultimately will benefit ELLs and Latino children. Among the critical elements would be: evaluating whether there are sufficient bilingual and bicultural staff, whether there are professional development activities that address linguistic, cultural diversity concepts and competencies, and the availability and use of culturally and linguistically appropriate methods of assessing children's performance.

Recommendation #4: Adequate resources and funding must be available for developmentally, linguistically, and culturally competent programs in early care and education that provide ELLs and Latino children with the skills to succeed in school.

As the presence of Latino and ELL children continues to rapidly increase, investing in quality early care and education programs is a priority. It is well established that early education programs offering instruction in the home language of the child are successful in building language skills and fostering future academic readiness. If adequate resources are not made available in early care and education settings, Latino and ELL children will continue to fall behind in school as they grow older.

While the Latino/ELL population continues to grow, as noted by the fact that almost 50% of 3 and 4 year old children in New York City come from homes where a language other than English is spoken, these children are under-enrolled in Pre-K services in community-based and school settings. Officials need to develop more effective outreach to underserved Latino and ELL children, especially in low-income, immigrant communities. Despite the need for quality early care and education among struggling working families, including ELL and Latino families, New York City has announced plans to reduce funds for day care sites as part of its efforts to close the looming budget deficit during a time of fiscal crisis. Vulnerable immigrant families that are particularly difficult to engage in community-based day care centers need outreach to fill unused day care and pre-school slots, not dismantling of programs.

Recommendation #5: New York State and New York City should use effective outreach strategies focused on Latino and ELL families to create awareness on availability of high quality child care and early education programs.

Latino and ELL parents must be valued as important participants in their children's early education. By incorporating home languages as a tool for outreach, Latino and ELL parents can be engaged in meaningful and effective ways in their children's early education. Better efforts need to be made in utilizing the cultural resources of the family and the community in outreach activities and in creating awareness about the availability of child care and early education programs. Some of those resources are the churches, synagogues, mosques, and other religious institutions that linguistically and culturally diverse families attend and the leaders of these places of worship who have the trust of the parents and community at large. Ethnic-language media, including daily, weekly and local community newspapers, TV and radio stations, are particularly effective means of communicating public service messages to the parents and guardians of 3 and 4 year old children who are not presently enrolled in center-based or school-based programs.

Recommendation #6: There has to be better coordination among state agencies, city agencies and school districts and between school districts, family care providers, and child care centers.

In order to close the achievement gap that exists between Latino and ELL students and other students, all acting agencies must work together to ensure that New York State sets and reaches benchmarks to close this gap. Key social service programs such as Even Start, Early Head Start, State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) need to work together and set forth goals that are inclusive of Latino and ELL children and their parents.

An essential benchmark is the development and implementation of a uniform Home Language Survey, such as that used by the Department of Education, for all 3 and 4 year old children seeking to enroll in the panoply of available early care and education programs. All agencies should jointly develop and administer an age-appropriate language proficiency assessments in English and Spanish (and other major languages where feasible), that is consistent with the Language Aptitude Battery Revised (LAB-R) used to identify ELL students between Kindergarten and 12th grade. A third area to be assessed and addressed programmatically through a joint-agency task force is the number of parents and guardians who are in need of English-language classes and/or GED instruction. Lastly, special consideration should be given to developing or expanding family literacy programs in community-based day care centers and public schools at hours that maximize parents' availability and participation.

Conclusion

“Attendance in high quality prekindergarten programs, furthermore, not only reduces achievement gaps, but also decreases the achievement gap for Hispanic children more than for any other ethnic group (Gormley & Gayer, 2004; Laosa & Ainsworth, 2007). Despite the clear benefits of preschool and the fact that it is strongly supported by parents, rates of preschool attendance are lower for dual language learners than for other categories of children (Iruka & Carver, 2006; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005).”

(Ballantyne, K.G., Sandeman, A.R., D’Emilio, T., & McLaughlin, N. *Dual Language Learners in the Early Years: Getting Ready to Succeed in School*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2008

We must make a difference in Latino and ELL children’s lives by strengthening and advocating for high quality early care and education and respecting and valuing cultural diversity. We have an obligation to make sure that all children are given a chance to receive quality education that values their culture and their communities and helps them reach their fullest potential.

APPENDIX A.

Forum Moderators, Speakers, and Panelists

Jennifer Jones Austin, Esq.

Senior Vice President,
Community Investment,
United Way of New York City

Erika Beltrán

Education Policy Analyst
National Council of La Raza

Maria Benejan, M.S.Ed.

Assistant Commissioner for Head Start,
New York City Administration for
Children's Services,
Child Care Head Start

Helen Blank

Director of Leadership and Public Policy
National Women's Law Center

Gladys Carrión, Esq.

Commissioner
New York State Office of Children
and Family Services

Pedro Cordero, M.S.Ed.

Director of Child Development Services
Goddard Riverside Community Center

Dolores Fernández, Ph.D.

President
Hostos Community College

Danielle Gonzales, M.Ed.

Deputy State Policy Director
Pre-K Now

Ayleen Guzmán, M.S.

Assistant Director of Program
Management Systems & Monitoring
New York City Administration
for Children's Services,
Child Care Head Start

Vanessa Leung, M.A.

Deputy Director
Coalition for Asian American
Children and Families

Janice Molnar, Ph.D.

Deputy Commissioner,
Division of Child Care
New York State Office of
Children and Family Services

Elba Montalvo, M.A.

Executive Director
The Committee for Hispanic
Children and Families, Inc.

Luis O. Reyes, Ph.D.

Coordinator
Coalition for Educational
Excellence for English
Language Learners

Manuel J. Rivera, Ph.D.

Deputy Secretary for Education
New York State

Pedro Ruíz, Ph.D.

Coordinator, Office of Bilingual Education
New York State Education Department

Jorge Saenz de Viteri, M.S.Ed.

Co-president
New York City Association for the Educa-
tion of Young Children

Maria Santos

Executive Director, Office of
English Language Learners
New York City Department of Education

APPENDIX B. Forum Agenda

The forum took place on June 24, 2008 at Baruch College of The City University of New York (CUNY), located at 55 Lexington Avenue, in New York City.

- 9:00 a.m.** **Welcoming Remarks and Introduction**
Elba Montalvo
Executive Director, The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc; Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education
- Gladys Carrión, Esq.
Commissioner, New York State Office of Children and Family Services
- 9:15 a.m.** **Latinos and ELLs in Early Care and Education: A National Perspective**
- Q & A session
- 11:00 a.m.** **Early Care and Education Advocacy in New York**
- Q & A session
- 12:30 p.m.** **Lunch**
- 1:15 p.m.** **City and State Government: The Early Care and Education System**
- Q & A session
- 3:15 p.m.** **Closing Remarks**
Pedro Cordero,
*Director of Child Development Services
Goddard Riverside Community Center;
Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education*

APPENDIX C. New York State BETAC Locations

ALBETAC

NYU Metro Center
726 Broadway – 5th Floor
New York, New York 10003
Tel: (212) 998-5198
Fax: (212) 995-4199
Director: Pat Lo
Email: Pl0@schools.nyc.gov

Suffolk BETAC at Eastern Suffolk BOCES

350 Martha Avenue
Bellport, New York 11713
Tel: (631) 286-6552
Fax: (631) 286-6556
Director: Terri Brady-Mendez
Email: Tbmendez@esboces.org

Erie I BOCES - West Regional BETAC

355 Harlem Road – Building C
West Seneca, New York 14224
Tel: (716) 821-7545
Fax: (716) 821-7556
Director: Anne Henry-Montante
Email: ahenry@eib.org

HABETAC at Brooklyn College

James Hall, Room 3304
2900 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11210
Tel: (718) 951-4668 or 4696
Fax: (718) 951-4909 or 4707
Director: Nicole B. Rosefort
Email: habetac@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Mid-Hudson BETAC at Ulster BOCES

175 Route 32 North
New Paltz, New York 12561
Tel: (845) 255-1402 ext. 1356
Fax: (845) 255-3836
Director: Dianne Matos-Craig
Email: Dcraig@mhric.org

Monroe 2 - Orleans BOCES

Mid-West BETAC
3599 Big Ridge Road
Spencerport, New York 14559
Tel: (585) 352-2790
Fax: (585) 352-2613
Director: Annalisa Allegro
Email: Aallegro@monroe2boces.org

Nassau BOCES-BETAC

102 Duffy Avenue
Hicksville, New York 11801
Tel: (516) 396-2090
Fax: (516) 396-2096
Director: Ellie Paiewonsky
E-mail: Epaiewon@mail.nasboces.org

Manhattan/Staten Island Regional BETAC

Hunter College, CUNY
695 Park Avenue – West Building, Room
949C
New York, New York 10021-5024
Tel: (212) 772-4768
Fax: (212) 650-3815
Contact: Diana Barros
Email: dbarros@hunter.cuny.edu

Mid-State BETAC at OCM BOCES

Irving E. Henry Center at Rodox Bldg. #7
P.O. Box 4774 - 6075 East Molloy Road
Syracuse, New York 13221
Tel: (315) 433-2664 or 2610
Fax: (315) 431-8449
Director: Justine Kolb
Email: jkolb@ocmboces.org

Questar III BOCES – East Region BETAC

10 Empire State Boulevard
Castleton, New York 12033
Tel: (518) 477-8771
Fax: (518) 477-1335
Contact: Gladys Cruz
Email: Gcruz@questar.org

Lower Hudson Valley BETAC

Fordham University, Graduate School of
Education
Butler Hall Room 220
100 Marymount Avenue
Tarrytown, NY 10591
Tel: (718) 817-5686
Fax: (718) 817-5668
Director: Carol Pertchik
Email: pertchik@fordham.edu

Spanish BETAC

NYU Metro Center
726 Broadway – 5th Floor
New York, New York 10003
Tel: (212) 998-5101 (General)
Fax: (212) 995-4199
Director: Nellie Mulkay
Webpage:
<http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/SBETAC.html>
Email: NYSSBETAC@gmail.com

The Brooklyn/Queens Regional BETAC – LIU

9 Hanover Place – 3rd Floor
Brooklyn, New York 11201
(Between Fulton & Livingston Streets)
Tel: (718) 246-6460 (Main Office) or 6461
Fax: (718) 780-4569
Director: Andrés Rodríguez, Ed.D.
Email: Andrew.Rodriguez@LIU.edu

Bronx Regional BETAC at Fordham University

2536 Hughes Avenue
Bronx, New York 10458
Mailing address:
Fordham University - Rose Hill Campus
Bronx BETAC Regional Center
441 E. Fordham Road
Bronx, New York 10458
Tel: (718) 817-0606
Fax: (718) 817-0604
Contact: Eva Garcia evgarcia@fordham.edu
Lillian Garcia aligarcia@fordham.edu

Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education (LCECE)

The Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education is an advocacy group committed to increasing the availability and quality of culturally and linguistically appropriate child care and early education for Latino children and all English Language Learners (ELLs) at both the city and state level.

LCECE Workgroup Members

Pedro Cordero, M.S.Ed.

Elba Montalvo, M.A.

Vanessa Ramos, Esq.

Luis O. Reyes, Ph.D.

Jorge Saenz de Viteri, M.S.Ed.

Gabriel Rodriguez, B.A.



**The Committee for
Hispanic Children
and Families, Inc.**

110 William Street, Suite 1802, New York, NY 10038
T: 212-206-1090 F: 212-206-8093 www.chcfinc.org



The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc.

At The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. we believe that if you work hard, live with integrity and serve others, anything is possible.

More than ever, the success of our country is tied to the success of the Latino community. That's why we combine education and advocacy for Latino children and families to expand opportunities, amplify our voice and promote participation that strengthens our communities.

Because when we succeed, America succeeds, and we can all thrive together.

Elba Montalvo
Executive Director

CHCF Board of Directors

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Denise Durham-Williams, Treasurer
Consultant

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Arisa Batista Cunningham
Vice-President, Diversity
Johnson & Johnson

Michael L. Cafarelli
President
GuardChild

Lance De La Rosa
Regional General Manager, Vice President
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

Katie Graziano
Business Development Director
The Excel Group

Christopher Herrick
Vice President Human Resources
Unilever

Carmine Magazino
Managing Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters

Dr. Gail Mellow
President
La Guardia Community College

Indhira Polanco
Vice President
Morgan Stanley

Claudia T. Valencia
Senior Product Director
D&B, RMS Global Solutions

Mark Wagar
President
Empire BlueCross BlueShield

Arnold F. Wellman
Vice President / Corporate Public Affairs
UPS