



## ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF YOUNG LATINO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN NEW YORK STATE UNDER THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

### OVERVIEW

This brief addresses the distinct early education needs of young Latino New York State English Language Learners (ELLs) under the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to be implemented in 2014, and makes policy recommendations to ensure these needs are met.<sup>1\*</sup>

The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. (CHCF) is working with state and city lawmakers, education experts and stakeholders in order to address the educational needs of Latino ELL students. Education administrators must lay out plans that will be inclusive of ELLs, prepare teachers, and engage parents to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the CCSS.

For Latino ELL students to succeed in school, meet college requirements, and pursue careers under the new standards, CHCF recommends New York State adopt a number of policy measures, including, but not exclusive to:

- **convening public hearings at the state and city levels on the impact of the CCSS on New York State ELLs;**
- **developing a parent education and involvement initiative, specifically for ELL populations;**
- **establishing culturally and linguistically competent professional development programs for teachers of ELLs; and**
- **designing reliable assessment tools that “accurately measure children’s progress in both content knowledge and English language development.”<sup>2</sup>**

These recommendations are elaborated in the “Recommendations and Policy Implications” section on page 3 of this brief.

### THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The CCSS are the product of a state-led initiative coordinated by the Council of Chief School Officers (CCSO), and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center), and developed through a collaborative process intended to eliminate inconsistent expectations across states. The CCSS are distinct from other educational frameworks in that they integrate language and literacy demands in the core content areas of English language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. The consensus in the education community is that using language appropriately in each discipline is essential for academic and professional success in the 21st century. The New York State Board of Regents adopted the standards in 2010 and has subsequently made additions to the standards for English Language Arts and Literacy and Mathematics and approved the Pre-Kindergarten Learning Standards.

\* “Young” learners are students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 3, typically between the ages of 4 and 8.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: THE CURRENT SITUATION IN NEW YORK STATE

Over 70% of the more than 185,000 New York State ELLs reside in New York City.<sup>3†</sup> In the 2010-2011 school year ELLs comprised 14.3% of New York City's public school population, excluding charter schools, totaling 154,466 students.<sup>4</sup> 57% of New York City ELLs are citizens.<sup>5</sup> Hispanic children represented 39% of the City public school population. Spanish-speakers comprised 64.8% of ELLs in New York City's public schools and 63% of ELLs statewide.<sup>6</sup> The other major ELL language groups in New York State are Chinese, Bengali, Arabic and Haitian Creole.<sup>7</sup> 84.4% of the City's long-term ELL population spoke Spanish as its primary language, indicating that Hispanic ELLs fare worse than other ELL groups in transitioning to full English education and demonstrating English fluency in class.<sup>8</sup>

Educational approaches for New York State ELLs need to be improved. Latino ELLs consistently score below the state-designated level of proficiency on the revised Language Assessment Battery-Revised (LAB-R) exam and the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (New York State ESLAT).<sup>9</sup> 21.6% of New York City ELLs are students with disabilities.<sup>10</sup> Based on work CHCF has done with parents of Latino ELLs, these parents have significantly lower average educational attainment histories than parents of English Language Proficient students (ELPs). Some Latino ELLs communicate in indigenous languages with their families (such as Peruvian Quechua or Mexican Nahuatl), necessitating access to Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) services.

New York State data indicate that ELL graduation rates are significantly lower than ELP rates. Only 40.3% of State ELLs and 35.7% of New York City ELLs in the 2006 Ninth Grade Cohort graduated on time, compared to 75.3% and 60.3% of ELPs, respectively.<sup>11‡</sup> New York City data on 9th Grade 2001-2007 Cohorts (four year graduates graduating in the 2005 to 2011 classes) shows that differences between respective ELL and ELP "on time" graduation rates have persisted over time.<sup>12</sup>

Latino ELL children have been underserved by the New York education system because of limited access to quality, culturally, and linguistically competent early childhood education programs; placement of inexperienced teachers in school districts with large Latino communities; school overcrowding in Latino neighborhoods; the marginalization of parents with limited English proficiency due to school correspondence and meetings being conducted exclusively in English; and a lack of effective ELL-focused academic support services. New York State has an opportunity to reverse these negative trends, as ELLs are concentrated in the lower elementary grades, with more than 50% of ELLs in grades K-3.<sup>13</sup> The future of improved education for ELLs begins with young learners.



† The approximated figure of 185,000 New York State ELLs is based on 2010-2011 New York City data showing 154,466 ELLs in the City public school system. However, other New York State data indicates that the number of ELLs in the State and City could be as high as 239,000 students.

‡ New York City graduation rates reflect averages of ELL and ELP graduation rates for students in the 2001-2007 9th Grade Cohorts, including 4 Year June and 4 Year August graduation figures.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

To enable young Latino and ELL students to succeed in school under the new standards, CHCF recommends New York State adopt the following policy initiatives:

1. The New York State Legislature and the New York City Council should **convene public hearings** to examine the impact of the CCSS on State and City ELLs, to receive information from stakeholders, and to develop solutions that would meet the needs of emerging bilinguals.
2. The New York State Education Department and New York City Department of Education should **develop a parent education and involvement initiative, specifically for young Latino ELL populations**. This initiative would create a native language parent education program to give parents a better understanding of the CCSS and the public education system. Community-based organization (CBO) work would be supported by elementary schools' parent coordinators. Programs would include CBO-administered presentations and informational resources for parents of ELLs. These programs would promote continued dialogue between schools and parents. Facilitators would conduct quarterly follow ups and work regularly with parent coordinators. This initiative could be similar to the plan being considered in Illinois, which creates "parent academies" that would educate parents of ELLs about "standardized testing, homework completion strategies and student-teacher relationships."<sup>14</sup> Based on CHCF cost estimates, a citywide program, serving approximately 100,000 parents, would cost about \$1.4 million.
3. New York City should **establish culturally and linguistically competent professional development programs** and expand the number of bilingual teachers who are prepared to work with the diverse Latino ELL population in early education, and who are knowledgeable about implementation of CCSS-based curricula. Because of the large percentage of ELL students in the early grades, professional development will be especially important for teachers of levels from Pre-K through Grade 3. Professional development must be ongoing throughout the school year for educators, administrators, and school teams.<sup>15</sup> It should enhance teachers' ability to teach and assess ELLs effectively under the CCSS.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, New York State should offer incentives to education colleges and training programs to hire full-time faculty and professors with experience, pedagogical knowledge, and cultural and language competence to supervise and monitor the training of early educators.
4. **Assessment tools should be designed to accurately measure "children's progress in both content knowledge and English language development."**<sup>17</sup> They should measure communication and understanding in a socially rich learning environment, instead of focusing on factual memorization. Depth, as opposed to breadth of learning should be emphasized to ensure that ELLs engage and understand material.<sup>18</sup> New York State's participation in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a starting point for developing reliable and accurate assessments under the CCSS.<sup>19</sup> Specialized assessments for ELLs should reflect the ways they learn differently than their ELP peers. Additionally, it is important that assessments are administered in ELLs' native languages to yield reliable data regarding students' progress in non-English Language Arts course content.<sup>20</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The CCSS present significant challenges and opportunities for addressing the needs of ELLs in New York City and New York State. Currently, ELLs are underserved by the state and city education systems. ELLs are concentrated in the early grades, necessitating expanded ELL early education and increased attention to the needs of young ELLs. If policies for ELL education continue according to the status quo, the implementation of the CCSS could have a devastating impact on the long-term educational success of ELL students. However, CHCF believes that the CCSS offer policymakers, educators, and stakeholders a unique opportunity to reestablish ELL education as a high-performance force in New York State. Improved parental involvement, carefully designed assessment tools, ongoing staff development, and the expansion of bilingual teaching initiatives are key factors that will contribute to the success of ELL education under the new standards.



<sup>1</sup> To highlight the early education needs of Latino children, CHCF convened a panel on December 16, 2011, on the implementation of the CCSS in New York in 2014 and their potential impact on Latino ELLs. Elba Montalvo, President and CEO of CHCF was the moderator and panelists included Raúl González, Legislative Director, NCLR; Dr. Betty Rosa, NYS Education Department, District XII (Bronx) Regent; Dr. Janice Molnar, Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Child Care Services in the NYS Office of Children and Family Services; Laura Rodríguez, former Deputy Chancellor of the NYC Department of Education Division of Students with Disabilities and ELLs; and Pedro Cordero, M.S. Ed., Director of Early Childhood Services, Goddard-Riverside Daycare Center.

<sup>2</sup> Erika Beltrán, "Preparing Young Latino Children for School Success: Best Practices in Assessments," National Council of La Raza Issue Brief, No. 23 (June 2012): 1.

<sup>3</sup> New York State Education Department P-12 Education Committee, "Raising the Academic Achievement of English Language Learners (ELLs)" (Dec. 5, 2011): 4. Retrieved from: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/docs/RegDecPart154.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Nick Pandey and Tom Huser, "The 2010-11 Demographics of New York City's English Language Learners," NYC Department of Education (Spring 2011): 4. Retrieved from: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/3A4AEC4C-14BD-49C4-B2E6-8EDF5D873BE4/108227/DemoRpt0722.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> New York City Department of Education, Office of English Language Learners, "Spring 2009 Education Policy Panel Presentation (PowerPoint)" (Spring 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Pandey and Huser, 10; New York State Education Department P-12 Education Committee, 5.

<sup>7</sup> P-12 Education Committee, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Pandey and Huser, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Board of Regents, New York Education Department, "Graduation Rates: Students Who Started 9th Grade in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007: Supplemental Grad Rate Slides" (June 2012): 84.

<sup>10</sup> Angelica Infante, "ELL Demographics & Performance 2010-2011," Office of English Language Learners, New York City Department of Education (Spring 2010): 6.

<sup>11</sup> New York State Education Department, "English Language Learners in New York: Recommendations for Engaging the Field to Review, Enhance, and Strengthen Commissioner's Regulations Part 154." Retrieved from: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/docs/De cRegPPPart154PDF.pdf>; Board of Regents, "Graduation Rates," 20; New York City Department of Education, "Cohorts of 2001 through 2007 (Classes of 2005 through 2011) Graduation Outcomes: Citywide Data File (Excel)," Retrieved from: [http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/72F0AB29-A095-4C22-95A2-096958175299/0/Graduation\\_Rates\\_Pub lic\\_Citywide.xls](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/72F0AB29-A095-4C22-95A2-096958175299/0/Graduation_Rates_Pub lic_Citywide.xls)

<sup>12</sup> New York City Department of Education, "Graduation Rates Public Citywide." Retrieved from: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/GraduationDropoutReports/default.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Alice Goodman-Shah, "New York City's English Language Learners: Demographics and Performance," New York City Department of Education Office of English Language Learners/AGS (August 2007): 27. Retrieved from: [http://schools.nycenet.edu/offices/teachlearn/ell/DemoPerformanceFINAL\\_10\\_17.pdf](http://schools.nycenet.edu/offices/teachlearn/ell/DemoPerformanceFINAL_10_17.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> "Governor Quinn Signs Law to Boost Bilingual Education: New Law to Pave the Way for 'Parent Academies' in Illinois," *Illinois Government News Network* (August 9, 2012). Retrieved from: <http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/ShowPressRelease.cfm?SubjectID=2&RecNum=10460>

<sup>15</sup> New York City Department of Education, "Office of English Language Learners, Spring 2009 Education Policy Panel Presentation (PowerPoint)" (Spring 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Beltrán, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Beltrán, 1.

<sup>18</sup> "Challenges and Opportunities for Language Learning in the Context of Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards (Conference Overview Paper)," *The Common Core for English Language Learners: Challenges and Opportunities Conference from Understanding Language: Language, Literacy and Learning in the Content Areas* (Paper & Lecture Series) (April 2012: Stanford University).

<sup>19</sup> Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), "PARCC Overview Fact Sheet" (July 2012). Retrieved from: [http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCC-Overview-July2012\\_0.pdf](http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCC-Overview-July2012_0.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Beltrán, 3.

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