

**Ensuring High Quality Early Care and Education
to Support
New York's Dual Language Learners and their Families**



**The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc.
Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education
February 2014**

The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. commissioned this paper to highlight the main components that a successful UPK initiative should include and provide recommendations regarding the needs of Dual Language Learners. The paper was prepared by Jorge Saenz De Viteri, M.S. Ed.* in collaboration with Vanessa Ramos, Esq., Elba Montalvo, M.A and Abe Barranca of CHCF, Dr. Luis O. Reyes, and the Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education.

Since 1982, The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. (www.chcfinc.org) has combined education and advocacy to expand opportunities for children and families and strengthen the voice of the Latino community in New York. Believing that the most effective way to support Latino families is by building upon their existing strengths and fostering self-sufficiency, CHCF provides a number of programs and services through Youth Development programs, an Early Care & Education Institute, and Policy and Advocacy initiatives. CHCF's model is innovative in its effective inclusion of cultural and linguistic competencies to effect change. CHCF's grassroots focus makes it one of the few Latino organizations in NYC that combines direct service with policy work that amplifies Latino voices at the local, state and national levels.

**Jorge Saenz de Viteri, M.S. ED., is a founding member of the Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education and the Past President of the New York City and Palisades Association for the Education of Young Children. He also serves as a co-facilitator of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Latino Interest Caucus and on New York City's Citizen Review Panel for Child Protective Services.*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New York City's initiative to provide free, full-day, universal pre-kindergarten to all children and the recently adopted appropriations in the 2014 federal budget present a unique opportunity to invest wisely in high quality, culturally and linguistically competent early education models for our children at the local and national levels.

Nearly two-thirds of English Language Learner students (ELL) in New York State are Spanish speakers.

Therefore, it is critical that we strategically invest in programs yielding the highest return of investment in a manner consistent with current evidence-based research supporting Dual Language Learner (DLL) instruction and students' families. It is well-established that high quality preschool strengthens young Latino ELL students' language and literacy skills and decreases academic achievement gaps.

In that light, The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. (CHCF) and the Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education (LCECE) make the following recommendations to UPK NYC's implementation:

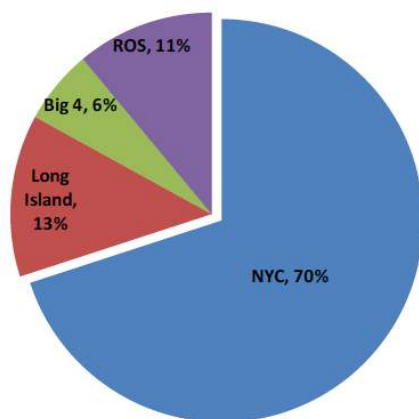
- Salary parity across New York City's entire publicly funded early care and education system.
- That funding is set aside for ongoing preparation and professional development of the professional prekindergarten workforce with coursework on dual language acquisition and effective teaching practices for DLL students.
- That New York City promotes specific strategies that encourage parent involvement and support Latino parents in creating engaging language and literacy experiences at home to reinforce children's learning at preschool.
- That the New York City Department of Education's web-based systems expand to encompass all schools and providers who administer Universal Pre-K services and incorporate child outcomes data being collected through the various online systems that pre-kindergarten programs are currently using.
- That New York City ensures that the web-based information is also available in print-format in the parents' home language.
- That New York City's early education programs ensure that children have opportunities to demonstrate their abilities, skills, and knowledge in any language, including their home language, and utilize assessments in both English and the home language that help determine what the child has learned and is capable of doing as well as the child's level of language development.
- That Mayor Bill de Blasio creates the Office for Early Care and Education.

Background and History: Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education

In 2007, The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. (CHCF) formed the Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education (LCECE), a workgroup of early care and education scholars, specialists, advocates and leaders to bring attention to the early education needs of Latino children from birth to age five in New York. LCECE's mission is to increase the availability and quality of culturally and linguistically appropriate child care and early education for Latino children and all English language learner (ELL) children in New York State.¹

In 2008, LCECE convened a public forum 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. The subsequent report, *Building on Latino Children's Language and Culture*, was released in December 2008. In December 2011, CHCF organized an expert panel to highlight the implications of New York State's adoption of the Common Core State Standards for Latino and ELL children from prekindergarten to the third grade. CHCF and LCECE also released an accompanying report, *Early Education and the Implementation of the Common Core State Standards: What would the CCSS mean for Latino and ELL children in New York?*²

Appropriations from the recently adopted 2014 federal budget and New York City's planned expansion of the UPK NYC initiative present a tremendous opportunity to expand early care and education programs nationally and locally. Therefore, **it is critical that we carefully plan how to invest our funds to ensure that New York's most vulnerable families have access to the highest quality culturally and linguistically competent early care and education services.**



According to the NYS Education Department (NYSED), in the academic school year 2011-12, there were a total of 224,300 LEP/ELL students in public schools throughout the State and an additional 90,871 ELLs in non-public schools. The overwhelming majority of ELLs are concentrated in New York City, which has close to 70% of the State's ELL public school population.³ According to 2009-10 data, NYS ELL students speak nearly 200 different languages. Nearly two-thirds of ELL students in the State speak Spanish, followed by Chinese, Bengali, Arabic, and Haitian Creole.⁴

Image Source:
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/docs/DecRegPPPart154PDF.pdf>

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has called for all states to develop a system of early childhood care and education with appropriate regulatory, governance, finance, and accountability mechanisms, to ensure that:

- **All Children** have access to safe and accessible high quality early childhood education that includes a developmentally appropriate curriculum, knowledgeable and well-trained program staff and educators, and comprehensive services that support their health, nutrition, and social wellbeing, in an environment that respects and supports diversity.
- **All Early Childhood Professionals** are supported as professionals with a career ladder, ongoing professional development opportunities, and compensation that will attract and retain high quality educators.
- **All Families** have access to early care and education programs that are affordable and of high quality, and are participants in the education and wellbeing of their children through family involvement in programs and schools, as well as opportunities to increase their educational attainment.
- **All Communities** are accountable for the quality of early childhood programs provided to all children, backed by the local, state, and federal funding needed to deliver quality programs and services.⁵

Given the current data, our demographics and Mayor Bill de Blasio’s public support to invest and expand high-quality early care and education programs to help close the achievement gap, the Latino Coalition for Early Care and Education believes it is timely and critical to build upon NAEYC’s vision. New York City must **invest in programs yielding the highest return of investment in a manner consistent with current evidence-based research supporting Dual Language Learner (DLL) instruction and students’ families.** We know that high quality preschool strengthens young Latino ELL students’ language and literacy skills and decreases achievement gaps between them and their non-Latino peers.⁶

Dual language learners are children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language.

- Office of Head Start Definition

CHCF and LCECE recognize that the State and the City support for UPK for all children offers a great opportunity to address the needs of ELL students. In that light, CHCF and LCECE propose the following recommendations for the implementation of UPK NYC:

Compensation

We know that a key component of quality programs is the quality of the teachers and educational teams.⁷ In New York, the average starting salary for teachers in non-public school settings (such as Head Start) is about \$36,473 a year. In contrast, teachers in the public school system have a starting annual base salary of \$45,530 and are eligible for annual incremental increases.

Pay Difference, Teachers in ACS-Funded Centers and Public School

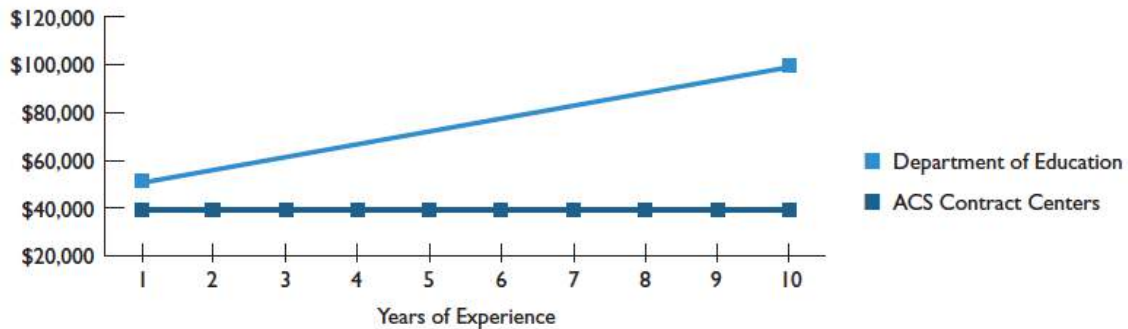


Image Source: CCI Primer 2011

Similar to President Obama’s Plan for Early Education for all Americans, CHCF and LCECE strongly recommend salary parity across New York City’s entire publicly funded early care and education system, “Well-trained teachers, who are paid comparably to K-12 staff.”⁸

Multi-Cultural Principle 6

Effective programs for children who speak languages other than English require continued development of the first language while the acquisition of English is facilitated

Children enrolled in the bilingual preschool programs showed significant gains in both Spanish and English vocabulary acquisition. Instead of experiencing a decline in their first language, children who attended the bilingual preschools demonstrated continued growth of first language skills. In addition, these children advanced their development of specific skills in Spanish, such as using increased numbers of words to tell a story. The authors attributed the children’s progress in both languages to the high quality of the programs children attended.

- Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs (2008)

Teacher Preparation and Ongoing Professional Development

The New York State 2013 Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Application stated that, *“New York will integrate the Core Body of Knowledge throughout its professional development system in a more intentional, thorough, and systematic way to establish that it is truly the foundation for all professional development and preparation in the state. Targeted strategies will be implemented to engage higher education faculty and other professional development providers to ensure their work is aligned with the Core Body of Knowledge.”*⁹

It is unfortunate that NYS was not one of the 2013 recipients. However, CHCF and LCECE support the State’s plan and recommends that the State elaborate on it to ensure that our early childhood teacher preparation programs are designed to offer sufficient coursework to adequately support and prepare the workforce to work with Dual Language Learners.

With regard to the UPK NYC initiative, we recommend that funding is set-aside to address the ongoing preparation and professional development of teachers, principals, directors and the professional pre-k workforce with trainings on dual language acquisition and effective teaching practices for DLLs.

Early childhood education (ECE) educators need the knowledge and skills to work with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families—a knowledge set that is often not provided in traditional training courses and certification processes.

Karen Hopper,
NCLR Issue Brief 22
Preparing Young Latino Children for School Success:
Best Practices in Professional Development

Parent, Family, Community Engagement & Data Collection

Parent, family, and community engagement (PFCE) is essential to meeting children’s school readiness and later school success.¹⁰ The Meaningful partnerships between preschool programs and families enhance the education of Dual Language Learners.

The U.S. Department of Education has pointed out that, *“Under current law, family engagement is too often focused on a checklist of activities rather than on driving results, funding isn’t always targeted to the most effective practices, and family engagement is treated as a discrete activity rather than as an integrated strategy that should have a place across multiple programs.”*¹¹

Specific strategies that encourage parent involvement and provide support to Latino parents in creating engaging language and literacy experiences at home reinforce children’s learning at preschool.¹²

The most recent evidence suggests that support for the home language during the PreKindergarten years will help, not hurt, long term attainment in English.

- Linda Espinosa, PHD
Challenging Common Myths About Young Dual Language Learners:
An Update to the Seminal 2008 Report
(2013)

One of the most effective ways to reach parents is through schools themselves. As an example, New York City’s Department of Education’s ARISParent Link is a web-based system available to parents in nine languages that compiles student K–12 performance data in one place, giving parents a continuing record of their child’s performance.¹³ This system is also used by central office staff to share additional resources, tools, links and articles to parents based on data collected through its portal.

CHCF and LCECE recommend that the system expand to encompass all schools and providers who administer Universal Pre-K services. This will not only create a more strongly data-informed school system, but will improve communication between all stakeholders.

The system needs to incorporate child outcomes data being collected through the various online systems that pre-kindergarten programs are currently using (i.e., Teaching Strategies GOLD) and we need to ensure that the information is also available in print-format in the parents’ home language.

New York City needs to ensure that early care and education programs are using best practices when screening and assessing young children. The Head Start Child Development Early Learning Framework states, “Programs are to ensure that children have opportunities to interact and demonstrate their abilities, skills, and knowledge in any language, including their home language.”¹⁴

Assessments in both English and the home language will help determine what the child has learned and is capable of doing as well as the child’s level of language development.¹⁵

A Systemic, Comprehensive Approach to High Quality Early Care and Education

Currently, too many governmental and regulatory entities have oversight of the various early care and education settings in NYS.¹⁶ Our ECE delivery system is fragmented and challenging to navigate for both parents and providers alike. Complex regulations, funding gaps and eligibility requirements exacerbate this problem.

The East Harlem Council for Human Services Inc., Bilingual Head Start Program

*Through our research efforts, we have worked with a variety of Head Start programs, and the East Harlem Bilingual Head Start program is the only program we have come across in New York City that **truly adopts a bilingual approach in its educational practices, viewing all of the children as dual-language learners, and providing a rich language environment in both Spanish and English.** (June 2012)*

Gigliana Melzi, Ph.D.

The Latino Family Involvement Project and
The Home and School Literacy Project,

Director of the Undergraduate Program in Applied Psychology
NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development

In October 2005, the NYC Administration for Children’s Services laid out an ambitious reform of its publicly subsidized child care, *Rethinking Child Care-An Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in New York City*.¹⁷

Several principles for an early care and education system guided this work. The plan focused on six goals to help Child Care and Head Start fulfill their mission and better serve young children and families with high quality early childhood development services.

Unfortunately, the plan has faced challenges stemming from the different regulatory policies and inadequate funding to support the delivery of high quality early care and education services.

In order to capitalize on possible funding available through city, state, and federal investments, CHCF and LCECE recommend that the Mayor’s Office consider the creation of the Office for Early Care and Education. Its primary role would be to streamline the coordination of services to support all families’ access to high quality early care and education, ensure that institutions and agencies are delivering high quality early care and education services, that professional development includes training in dual language acquisition and effective teaching practices for Dual Language Learner students and are transparent to the various constituencies. Furthermore, this agency would ensure that NYC’s system maximizes all potential funding sources so that it can adequately invest in and fund the provision of high quality full-day early care and education for all children.

*New York is one of the top states in the country in terms of the number of Limited English Proficient students. Our population continues to grow, particularly among the youngest children. In order to ensure equitable outcomes for our students and to meet the challenges of Race to the Top, we will need early childhood education to deliver its most potent and lasting effects. **This will require a targeted approach with English Language Learners that emanates from a research-based understanding of what’s good for young ELLs and not solely from what programs feel prepared to deliver.***

Zoila Tazi, PHD,
Department Chair Childhood Education and Associate Professor,
Mercy College

Lesson Learned from Illinois

- ensure that pre-K providers and schools receive financial support from the state and their local districts for resources they spend on English Language Learners, and that there is an adequate bilingual education budget to cover all eligible children
- track outcomes for ELL students over time and reserve funding for evaluative studies to determine where investment is most (and least) effective
- continue to align the ELL experience in pre-K, kindergarten and the early grades and enable shared professional development opportunities in ELL instruction for teachers and school leaders across the PreK-3rd grade.

Maggie Severns
Starting Early With English Language Learners
New America Foundation
April 2012

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