

Promising Practices in Education

“**E**ducation has always been a pathway to social and economic integration for every generation of immigrants and their U.S-born descendants. The United States must make a commitment to ensure that all students, including those from an immigrant background, have access to a high-quality education that will prepare them for success in today’s knowledge-based economy. Educating immigrants and their children is vital to our ability to remain strong and prosperous as a nation.”

—**Andrés Henríquez, Program Officer, Education**
Carnegie Corporation of New York, New York, New York

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INTRODUCTION

The demographic impact of immigration is especially visible in the children and youth population. Children of immigrants make up nearly one out of five K-12 students in the United States.¹ Their growth has been rapid, going from only six percent of the school-age population in 1970 to 19 percent by 2000. Given the size of this population, how our educational institutions receive, treat, and teach children of immigrants not only affects immigrant families but will determine our country's long-term economic and social well-being.

The U.S. education system, from preschool through college, plays an especially important role in integrating immigrants and their children. The

system helps them acquire English, academic knowledge, vocational skills, and the history and values of their new homeland. For many immigrants, education provides the raw materials to build a better life, work toward the American Dream, and become full members of U.S. society.

This section explores the challenges of serving newcomers' educational needs, from pre-school through college, and identifies successful strategies and programs to address them. The primary focus will be on children of immigrants who live in low-income households and whose parents have relatively limited education.



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1. Capps, Randy, Michael Fix, Julie Murray, Jason Ost, Jeffrey Passel, and Sinta Herwanto. 2005. *The New Demography of America's Schools: Immigration and No Child Left Behind Act*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.

EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

While children of immigrants share the general challenges faced by all children in obtaining a high-quality education, there are several unique factors that affect newcomer families.

- **Most live in “mixed status” families with limited access to support services.** Over three-quarters of children of immigrants are born in the United States and have the same rights and access to government services as other citizens. However, most (85 percent) live in families with at least one non-citizen parent, and an estimated three

Studies show that without intervention, children of immigrants are significantly less likely than other low-income children to be exposed to reading and writing activities during the first five years of life.⁴

million live in households headed by at least one undocumented adult.² Immigrant parents often have limited English skills, minimal knowledge of the U.S. education systems, and less access to crucial services. The combination of these factors means that children of immigrants often must overcome multiple barriers to succeed in school.

- **Many have limited English skills.** About one-third of children in immigrant families are limited English proficiency (LEP). The largest LEP population is in elementary schools. As children move through the school system, the size of this population declines but does not disappear altogether. Interestingly, most LEP students are born in the

United States: 77 percent of LEP elementary school students and 56 percent of LEP middle and high school students are American-born. These high percentages are due to the fact that many U.S.-born LEP students live in “linguistically isolated households,” a term defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as families in which no person aged 14 or over speaks English at least very well.

- **Children of immigrants are more likely to live in low-income and less-educated households.** Twenty-one percent of children in immigrant families live in poverty compared with 14 percent of those in U.S.-born

families.³ About a third of children of immigrants and half of LEP children live with at least one parent who has less than a high school education. This fact, combined with limited literacy skills in both English and their first language and limited parental involvement in education, can affect the development of children in immigrant families.

- **Immigrant families have strengths that can erode over time.** Most immigrant families arrive with multiple strengths: good health, intact families, strong work ethic, and high aspirations for the future. But research suggests that many of these strengths dissipate the longer the family stays in the United States. For children of immigrants, the length of residence is correlated with declining academic motivation and achievement.⁵ Effective programs, however, can reverse this trend and help children of immigrants stay on the positive path to success.



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2. Passel, Jeffrey. 2005. *Estimates of the Size and Characteristics of the Undocumented Population*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center.
3. Hernandez, Donald. 2004. “Demographic Changes and Life Circumstances of Immigrant Families.” *The Future of Children* 14(3) 17-47.
4. Yarosz, Donald and William Steven Barnett. 2001. “Who Reads to Young Children? Identifying Predictors of Family Reading Activities.” *Reading Psychology*, 22:67-81.
5. Portes, Alejandro and Ruben G. Rumbaut. 2001. *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT AND CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) was passed with the goal to ensure that all children, including LEP students, receive a high-quality education. With respect to disadvantaged students, including immigrant and LEP students, NCLB requires each school to:

- Identify and report scores on standardized tests separately for LEP, low-income, and minority students (including Latinos and Asian Americans).
- Help these identified populations make progress in learning English and other academic subjects.
- Offer students the right to transfer or receive additional educational services if the school does not meet state test standards.
- Close or restructure if the school's student population performs poorly on standardized tests over several years.

- Have highly qualified teachers in all classrooms, including those providing English language instruction or bilingual education.

- Communicate with parents in their native language about their children's academic performance and the school's performance as measured by the standards of the Act.

Implementation of this law has been highly controversial, and several states have sued the federal government, alleging inadequate funding as well as challenging its authority to impose certain requirements on local schools. The Act's impact on children of immigrants is not yet fully understood. Some experts see the potential for NCLB to hold schools accountable to immigrant and LEP children, helping them improve academic performance. A recent survey of state and district school officials confirmed that educators believe the law has brought increased attention to the challenges faced by LEP students. Yet at the

same time, they expressed concern that the Act's accountability requirements are inflexible and do not provide enough time for these students to become proficient in English. The survey also found that fewer schools were teaching LEP students in their native language because of the law's emphasis on learning English.⁶

For more analysis of how the Act affects children of immigrants, see Capps, Randy et al. 2005. *The New Demography of America's Schools: Immigration and No Child Left Behind Act*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.

6. Center for Education Policy. 2005. *From the Capitol to the Classroom: Year 3 of the No Child Left Behind Act*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Education Policy.

ELEMENTS OF PROMISING PRACTICES



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Experts on early childhood and education have identified the following elements as critical for helping children of immigrants succeed in school and beyond.

Early intervention is critical: Studies have shown that children’s skills in kindergarten can predict their educational achievement level in third grade, and their achievement at the end of the third grade is highly correlated with future school success.⁷

- **Provide early intervention through high-quality family literacy or preschool programs.** Well-designed early educational programs can help children of immigrants, especially those with limited English skills and less access to services, develop literacy, problem-solving, and social skills, while showing parents how to become teachers for their children. Two promising early educational approaches for this target population include high-quality family literacy and preschool programs designed to serve newcomers.

- **Make educational programs accessible to immigrant families.** Successful programs are linguistically and culturally competent, located at convenient sites, and offer a welcoming environment. These programs use a variety of methods

to increase access, including hiring multilingual staff, conducting outreach to increase participation by immigrant families, holding events to celebrate immigrant cultures, developing programs that specifically address the interest and needs of newcomers, and forming partnership with immigrant parents or newcomer organizations to help create a more inclusive environment.

- **Increase parental involvement in their children’s schools.** Research consistently indicates that academic achievement of children will increase if parents or family members are involved in their education. Promising practices in this area include developing multilingual outreach information, hiring bilingual staff, and forming partnerships with immigrant-serving organizations to provide language assistance, parent liaison, and leadership training to immigrant parents. These approaches allow immigrant parents to actively participate in school programs and engage in advocacy to help improve their children’s education.

7. Tankanish, Ruby. 2004. “Leveling the Playing Field: Supporting Immigrant Children from Birth to Eight.” *The Future of Children* 14(3) 61-79.

- **Provide training to teachers and administrators to help them become familiar with the background of immigrant families and to develop effective teaching methods.** Schools in new immigrant destinations are especially short of personnel who are familiar with different cultural backgrounds and who have training and experience in teaching English learners.⁸ To address this gap, foundations can support documentation of promising teaching methodologies, innovative continuing education and professional development programs for teachers, and efforts to bring more bicultural and bilingual teachers and administrators into the field.



- **Provide age- and developmentally appropriate support programs that help children of immigrants succeed at all levels of education, from early childhood through higher education.** Tutoring, mentoring, college preparation, counseling on college and career options, and other support programs can help children of immigrants achieve educational success. In many cases, these children may be the first in their family to graduate from high school or attend college.

- **Help immigrant families and organizations advocate for better education.** Improving academic achievement among low-income children of immigrants requires more than good programs. In many low-income school districts, the problems are much larger. Schools in such districts are often underfunded; their facilities are in poor conditions; they may lack up-to-date text books or computers; and the curriculum may not be sufficient to prepare students for college. Helping immigrant communities become active participants and leaders in developing and monitoring policy changes is often needed to make significant reforms, whether within a single school or across a school system.

8. Wainer, Andrew. 2004. *The New Latino South and the Challenge to Public Education: Strategies for Educators and Policymakers in Emerging Immigrant Communities*. Los Angeles, CA: Tomas Rivera Institute.

PROMISING PRACTICES: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

CREATING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

The Village for Early Childhood Education
Littleton, Colorado
<http://village.littleton.publicschools.net>

Started as a small preschool in an abandoned building provided by the local school district, the Village for Early Childhood Education is a community preschool open to the general public. It serves 350 children from ten different countries through a variety of programs, including Head Start, state-funded preschool, and special education. The program is center-based, with full-time and part-time class options, and its curriculum is aligned with the local school district to help children prepare for kindergarten.

The Village believes that families are the foundation for each child's education and actively supports and encourages a partnership between home and school. As the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) has grown to almost 20 percent of its school population, the Village has taken steps to make these families feel comfortable and respected. These steps include:

- **Hiring bilingual Spanish-speaking teachers and aides to communicate with its largest LEP family population.** The Village has a Spanish-language hotline that provides information about school activities and allows Spanish-speaking parents to leave messages for

the staff. The Village also has an agreement with the local school district to provide interpretation and translation services in other languages as needed.

- **Distributing non-English books to immigrant families so that parents can read to their children in their native language.** While the Village uses an English immersion curriculum, it recognizes that children benefit from being read to at home regardless of the language. Providing parents with native-language materials makes it easier for them to help children learn and develop literacy skills.

- **Incorporating cultures and traditions of enrolled families** into the classroom curriculum and into special events that promote cross-cultural learning and understanding among the enrolled families.

- **Offering a variety of bilingual courses (English/Spanish) for parents,** including parenting classes to help families reinforce their children's classroom learning, as well as financial literacy classes to help newcomers learn financial management skills.

- **Making available ESL and citizenship classes to immigrant parents.** The Village originally offered ESL classes at its site, but as the demand for the classes grew, it approached the city to find other locations for an expanded program. The City of Littleton now offers multiple ESL and citizenship classes at the city library and local churches, and many of the participants are families whose children attend the Village.

Despite working with a large low-income and immigrant student population, the Village has been effective in helping children become school ready. The public school district found that entering kindergarteners who had at least two years of schooling at the Village performed 35 percent higher on English literacy assessments than children who did not attend pre-school.



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WORKING WITH IMMIGRANT PARENTS

SPARK Georgia and La Escuelita Atlanta, Georgia www.sparkga.org

SPARK Georgia, a project of Smart Start Georgia and United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, uses a community-based approach to help immigrant families learn about early education opportunities and develop skills for participating in their children's education over the long run. Funded through a multi-state initiative of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation,⁹ SPARK Georgia works with six community agencies and in partnership with local elementary schools to provide early childhood assessment, information, and other assistance to 1,000 children and their families in predominately low-income neighborhoods.

The formation of La Escuelita ("The Little School") in the City of Norcross—a small Atlanta suburb where approximately 80 percent of the public school children receive free or reduced lunches—is a good example of SPARK Georgia's collaborative approach. Following home visits and community meetings in a mostly Spanish-speaking neighborhood, residents of two nearby apartment complexes asked if the project could help them start a program to prepare their children for formal education. Lacking funds for child care and transportation, many of these residents had little choice but to leave their children in the care of relatives or neighbors while they worked.

SPARK Georgia and United Way worked with the families to obtain a grant from the Primerica Citicorp Foundation to provide an onsite early education program for three- and four-year-olds. Overseen by a parental advisory committee, the program (1) hired a professional, bilingual teacher to provide six hours of early education weekly to 32 children; (2) developed a bilingual curriculum to strengthen language, cognitive, and social skills; (3) helped families apply for and transition into either the state-funded preschool program or the local elementary school; and (4) maintained active parental involvement through holding regularly scheduled community meetings and encouraging parents to attend the school with their children. At the same time, SPARK Georgia worked with local preschools and the public elementary school to organize teacher trainings and meetings between educators and immigrant parents to help these institutions become better prepared to teach Spanish-speaking children.

SPARK Georgia's community approach in Norcross has not only increased the number of immigrant children enrolled in the state's preschool program, including a significant number from families with undocumented members,¹⁰ but it has also helped parents learn how to actively support their children's education. As SPARK Georgia's Project Coordinator Roberta Malavenda explains, "La Escuelita is not only intended to provide critical early education to children, but it also



offers the opportunity to grow parents' leadership skills and help them develop a voice in their community."

The results from the first year of the La Escuelita program suggest that it is having this effect. Dion Jones, the principal of the nearby Rockbridge Elementary School, observes that the La Escuelita children were well prepared for kindergarten and, equally important, their parents are participating in his school's activities. Rockbridge held its annual International Day celebration in the fall of 2005, and Mr. Jones notes that many of the parents who have been active with SPARK Georgia helped organize the event and have transferred their energy from La Escuelita to their new school.

9. SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids) is a W.K. Kellogg-funded initiative to support multi-sector efforts to prepare children for school. SPARK projects involve partnerships among community-based organizations, state agencies, and schools to provide comprehensive support to youngsters and high-quality early learning experiences required for success in school.

10. Approximately 90 percent of the eligible children in 2005 La Escuelita program were enrolled in a state-funded preschool.

HELPING IMMIGRANT FAMILIES AND THEIR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS BECOME TEACHERS

Good Beginnings Never End Long Beach, California

Although child care and preschool education are increasingly provided in center-based facilities, a large number of children in immigrant families do not use such care.¹¹ For many low-income or LEP immigrants, leaving their children with relatives, neighbors, or family-based providers (defined as someone who cares for two or more unrelated children in her home) is often the most affordable and accessible form of day-care. However, many of these providers have little or no early childhood training and also face language and cultural barriers themselves.

With support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and First Five LA, Long Beach City College has been operating the Good Beginnings Never End (GBNE) project, which uses several strategies to help family-based providers, grandparents, and other informal caretakers in low-income, largely immigrant neighborhoods provide better child care. These include home visits and coaching, trainings to become licensed child care providers, and helping the providers take advantage of community resources.

- **Home visits.** A bilingual staff member, or one accompanied by an interpreter, visits and conducts assessments based on the Family Day Care Rating Scale¹² and then works with providers to improve their quality of care. Some of the frequently addressed issues include improving home-safety conditions, providing school-readiness information, ensuring that children receive immunizations, and increasing literacy and education projects such as reading, art, music, and field trips to libraries, schools, parks, and museums.

Home visits require a high level of trust, and GBNE has developed a number of practices for conducting successful home visits with immigrant family daycare providers. These include partnering with trusted community organizations and ethnic media outlets to conduct out-

reach and to assure participants that GBNE is not a licensing organization that will report conditions to authorities. GBNE also uses a variety of incentives and gifts to attract and maintain participation in its programs, including distributing children's books, houseplants, and other useful items. Under the Knight Foundation grant, GBNE is working with 35 family providers over a three-year period.

- **Trainings to become licensed providers.** As the trainer for the St. Mary Medical Center's Families in Good Health program, GBNE offers a child development course to help low-income refugee women become licensed child care providers. The course provides participants with extensive information about early childhood development and how to facilitate children's cognitive, emotional and social growth. In its first year, the program trained 42 Cambodian refugee women, 11 of whom became licensed providers, the largest group of Southeast Asian women to become licensed at one time in Long Beach.

- **Linking providers to community resources.** A key element of GBNE's program is linking the clientele to community resources, including programs operated by nonprofits, libraries, and public schools. For instance, all of the participants in GBNE's home visit program also participate in the Long Beach Public Library Summer Reading and "Raising a Reader" book exchange programs. In addition, GBNE provides participants with information about the availability of children's health insurance and offers classes on homeownership and small business development.

Three years into its home visit program, GBNE has improved the quality of care provided by its participating family providers, as demonstrated by:

- A reduction in the amount of time children spent watching television and an increase in literacy activities.
- Increase in the number of children enrolled in Head Start and other early childhood programs.
- Increase in immunizations and providers' awareness of nutrition, dental hygiene, and home safety issues.

- Increase in providers' knowledge of how to facilitate children's social and emotional development.

PROMOTING FAMILY LITERACY

Research has documented the importance of rich parent-child language interactions during early childhood. A preschooler's language experiences at home lay the groundwork for developing more sophisticated literacy skills during elementary school. Family literacy is a strategy that can help both immigrant adults and children learn English and literacy skills, while teaching parents how to support their children's cognitive and social development in their everyday lives. As described in the English Acquisition section of this toolkit, successful family literacy programs for immigrant families usually have four components:

- ESL and adult education for immigrant parents, as needed.
- Early childhood education to children to bolster skills needed to succeed in school.
- Training for parents to support the educational growth of their children.
- Giving parents and children the opportunity to practice shared language learning and activities with the goal of increasing such activities at home.

Research indicates that high-quality family literacy programs can increase the cognitive and social development of children and help them become better prepared to learn in school.¹³ See the "Promising Practices in Language Acquisition" section of the toolkit for more information about family literacy as well as descriptions of successful programs.

11. Brandon, Peter. 2004. "The Child Care Arrangements of Preschool-age Children in Immigrant Families in the United States." *International Migration Review* 42(1):65-87.

12. The Family Day Care Rating Scale assesses the quality of child care provided by a family child-care program. It assesses a provider in seven areas: space and furnishings for care and learning, basic care, language and reasoning, learning activities, social development, adult needs, and provisions for exceptional children. For more information, go to www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers.

13. Hayes, Andrew. 2001. *High Quality Family Literacy Programs: Child Outcomes and Impacts*. Louisville, KY: National Center for Family Literacy.

PROMISING PRACTICES: K-16 PUBLIC EDUCATION

HELPING SCHOOLS COMMUNICATE WITH IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

Refugee Family Services' Bilingual School Liaison Program
Clarkston, Georgia
www.refugeefamilyservices.org

One of the most common barriers to increasing parental engagement among immigrants and refugees is the difficulty many parents have communicating with educators in English. In addition, many parents come from cultures in which parental involvement with schools is not the norm. Refugee Family Services (RFS), a nonprofit organization that assists newcomer families in the Atlanta area, has developed an innovative interpreter program that serves parents in multiple languages by rotating trained parent liaison/interpreters across different schools. With funding from the Goizueta Foundation and the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, RFS started the Bilingual Liaison project in 1999 through a partnership with the DeKalb County school system. Four bilingual liaisons were initially assigned to 15 DeKalb schools that had the highest concentration of English learners. Each liaison worked with LEP families to facilitate communication with teachers and administrators, as well as to identify difficulties or challenges faced by children of immigrants and refugees. By sharing resources across different schools, the Bilingual Liaison Program has been able to provide assistance in numerous languages. During the first five years of the program, RFS liaisons assisted over 1,000 families.

Equally important, RFS liaisons have identified and worked with schools to address systemic issues affecting newcomer children by participating in the school district's International Task Force, created to address gaps in educational services for foreign-born students. Their involvement has led to the creation of education/parenting workgroups as part of a year-long strategic planning effort to prepare multiple service sectors for the incoming Somali Bantu refugee population. In addition, the liaisons participated in the district's Diversity Roundtable, designed to give voice to the multiethnic community served by the county.

DVD

Watch the DVD **Rain in a Dry Land:** **The Supermarket**

The children of newly arrived immigrants must learn the ropes of American life quickly. They often must assume the roles of translator, advisor, advocate, and protector for their LEP parents. The learning curve can be difficult, as witnessed when a newly arrived refugee teen and his father struggle with a supermarket transaction.



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The School Liaison program has also been instrumental in creating two new programs to serve the district's growing immigrant and refugee population: The Refugee Early Childhood Learning Initiative, through which refugee mothers learn how to help their children become school-ready, and the Youth Special Services Program serving at-risk refugee youths.

The program has expanded to two additional school districts. Eight liaisons currently serve newcomers in 60 schools and Head Start/preschool programs in the Atlanta metropolitan area, providing services in Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese, Amharic, Arabic, Bosnian, Farsi, Urdu, Kurdish, Oromo, Pashto, and Russian. By serving as a bridge between schools and immigrant families, the School Liaison program only improves the academic achievement of immigrant children, but it demonstrates that language assistance can be provided in a cost-effective way through creative collaborations that share resources across schools. The Ruddle Memorial Youth Foundation has funded an evaluation of the program to assess whether it can be disseminated as a model for other communities.

TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Logan Square Neighborhood Association
Chicago, Illinois
www.lsna.net

Serving a mix-income Chicago neighborhood in which Latinos make up more than two-thirds of the population, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) has led an extraordinary organizing effort to change local schools from isolated institutions to community partners for learning and empowerment. LSNA first became involved with the local education system during the early 1990s when its members organized a campaign for new schools to relieve overcrowding. Their efforts resulted in the construction of five elementary school annexes and two middle schools, as well as strong relationships with local educators. Recognizing that

adding new schools was only the first step to improving education in a neighborhood where 90 percent of the public school students were from low-income families, LSNA developed collaborative programs with local schools to improve the quality of education.

For over a decade, LSNA has operated a parent mentor program that brings parents into the classroom—from pre-school through eighth grade—to provide tutoring. LSNA trains parents (the vast majority of whom are immigrants), provides each with an annual \$1,200 stipend, and places them into classrooms to help teachers for two hours each day. Spanish-speaking parents are placed in bilingual classes and are able to participate in the same activities as other parents. LSNA coordinates the program and holds weekly workshops to allow participants to share experiences and discuss challenges.

Observers note that the program has not only provided students with extra attention and resources, but it has transformed the relationship between parents and schools. The program has attracted large numbers of immigrant women who have had no previous contact with schools even when their children were enrolled. Immigrant parents, who were intimidated by the education system or felt their status as Spanish speakers prevented participation in their children's education, found ways to help their schools through this program.

At the same time, their presence allowed teachers and principals to learn more about the needs of local families and to develop relationships based on mutual trust and respect with the growing newcomer community.

Building upon the success of the Parent Mentor program and recognizing that schools are critical institutions for helping immigrants become self-sufficient, LSNA has worked with educators to develop other projects, including:

- **Literacy Ambassador Program**, in which teams of teachers and parents hold house meetings to increase community awareness and participation in schools. These meetings, held in the homes of neighborhood families, highlight school resources and discuss how families can help their children develop literacy and reading skills. The program pairs a teacher with a parent mentor to bridge any communication difficulties between newcomer families and educators.

- **Community Learning Centers**, in which six public schools become evening community learning centers offering a wide range of adult education classes (ESL, family literacy, GED, computer, and citizenship) and children's activities (tutoring, arts, culture, and sports). Most of the classes are free and are taught by outside agencies, community college instructors, school teachers, parents, and volunteers. Because the

centers provide free child care, parents can improve their skills while their children learn and play in a safe, enriching environment. The centers are also a place where immigrant parents can teach and experience their own culture. This program's success has led the local school district to open evening learning centers in schools throughout the city.

- **Nueva Generacion ("Grow Your Own") Bilingual Teacher Preparation Program**, in which parents who have participated in the Parent Mentor program and want to become teachers can enroll in a six-year instructional program provided by Chicago State University. At the end of the program, participants receive a four-year college degree and become certified, bilingual teachers who can work in neighborhood schools. Approximately 60 percent of the initial class of 30 students is expected to graduate in 2007.

LSNA's programs have not only changed the school's dynamic with the local community, but it has helped raise reading and math test scores in the six schools that have had the Parent Mentor program for over five years. Test scores have increased by over 35 percent, and the percentage of students who scored in the lowest quartile on these achievement tests have been cut in half. Equally important, LSNA's work has also transformed many of the people who participated in its programs. Many of LSNA's education project staff—including managers of the Parent Mentor, Literacy Ambassador, and Community Learning Centers programs—are immigrant women who initially participated in the Parent Mentor program and have since become neighborhood leaders who regularly speak to policymakers, legislators, or reporters about educational issues. As LSNA's lead education organizer Joanna Brown observes, "They can say with confidence that parental and community involvement matters—it has improved their schools and their neighborhood."



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IMPROVING TEACHER TRAINING

**Center for Latino Achievement
and Success in Education**
Athens, Georgia
www.coe.uga.edu/clase

Responding to the rapid growth of the local Latino population, the University of Georgia's Center for Latino Achievement and Success in Education (CLASE) has developed an innovative project that provides high-quality professional development and technical assistance to local school districts. Started with a grant by the Goizueta Foundation in 2002, CLASE trains over 100 educators each year in a week-long summer institute that provides participants with information on best practices for teaching English language learners, model curriculum and strategies for instructing immigrant children in different academic subjects, cultural background on Georgia's emerging Latino communities, and effective ways to increase parental involvement.

CLASE selects multiple teams of participants from school districts or individual schools through a competitive process. Applicants propose specific projects for improving Latino student educational achievement and must demonstrate that they have the capacity and resources to implement the project in the upcoming school year. Following the summer institute, CLASE provides technical assistance to these teams throughout the academic year. Typical projects include developing trainings for teachers, increasing Latino parent engagement, and implementing new program ideas such as providing bilingual kindergarten instruction or modified science instruction for English learners. By combining training with follow-up assistance, CLASE helps educators put to use their newly acquired knowledge to improve Latino educational



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achievement. In addition to its summer institute program, CLASE organizes conferences on specific subject areas and leads Georgia teachers and administrators in summer trips abroad to learn about language, education, and culture.

Surveys combined with follow-up observations of individual projects illustrate that CLASE has had a significant impact in helping local educators develop new programs to serve the state's growing Latino population. Over 90 percent of its summer program participants indicate that the CLASE training and technical assistance had a medium to large influence in improving classroom instruction, attitudes, and preparedness for working with Latino students. As described more fully at its web site, CLASE has also documented the benefits of the projects undertaken by its summer institute participants, including those that increase student achievement.¹⁴

PROMOTING THE SUCCESS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The PROMISE Initiative
Southern California
www.promise-initiative.org

More than one in every four students in California is an English language learner (ELL), the largest population in the country. And 65 percent of these students—over one million youngsters—are enrolled in six Southern California counties: Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura. Of this number, less than seven percent presently have access to both targeted English language development and the full demands of the core curriculum. Gaps in achievement are evident at every grade level and on every standardized test.

To address these growing disparities, the offices of education in the six Southern California counties have partnered with California Tomorrow, a statewide organization that has been promoting cultural equity for 20 years, to create the PROMISE Initiative.

14. The analysis can be found at www.coe.uga.edu/clase/professional_development.htm.

Pursuing Regional Opportunities for Mentoring, Innovation, and Success for English Learners, known as PROMISE, seeks “to marshal the expertise and resources of the six counties by developing a powerful infrastructure for conducting research and development, building capacity, and providing high-quality sustained support to schools, teachers, and providers.”

PROMISE’s unique approach does not attempt to implement a particular new curriculum or instructional program developed outside the schools. Rather, it relies on “principles-based reform,” helping schools reach a deep understanding of current research and—through networked reflection, dialogue, assessment, and planning—design their own programs for student success. The aspiration of PROMISE is transformative in nature: To create a learning environment in which bilingualism, biliteracy, and multiculturalism will actively engage the experiences, skills, cultures, and languages of students in their English learning.

Distilled from the best of current research on English learning and school change, PROMISE is built upon eight interrelated core principles:

- **Enriched and Affirming Learning Environments** that promote a sense of community, self-determination, trust, respect, and democracy among students.

- **Empowering Pedagogy**, with key structural components that promote interaction among students, build student and family voice, and provide opportunities for leadership.

- **Challenging and Relevant Curriculum** that is cognitively complex and coherent enough to develop the mental flexibility, problem-solving skills, and capacity for divergent thinking that the future will demand.

- **High-Quality Instructional Resources** aligned with relevant standards yet enriched with graphics and accessible formats to foster active engagement.

- **Valid and Comprehensive Assessment** integrated into learning and teaching, designed to promote reflective practice and data-driven planning.

- **High-Quality Professional Preparation and Support** intended to foster learning communities among administrators, teachers, and staff.

- **Powerful Family and Community Engagement** to build leadership among parents, actively educating them and drawing them into their children’s learning, while helping teachers and administrators develop cross-cultural skills.

- **Advocacy-Oriented Administrative and Leadership Systems** to integrate and coordinate structures and mechanisms in support of the needs of ELL students systemically throughout the school’s programs.

Although it does not prescribe particular curricular approaches, PROMISE provides planning tools to the school teams, as well as access to almost 30 successful research-based programs that embody the core principles.

Notwithstanding these rich resources, the creation of PROMISE as a six-county collaboration to promote the success of ELL students, in and of itself, is an impressive accomplishment. The first phase of PROMISE is a three-year pilot study focusing on systemic school reform, involving teams of three schools in each of the districts. The pilot will test the implementation of the eight core principles, honing in on what works and what doesn’t. The findings will shape the five-year field test that will involve up to 100 schools.

DVD

**Watch the DVD
Rain in a Dry Land:
Algebra Class**

Public schools in America have different ways of integrating immigrant students into the classroom. Sit in on a fast-paced high school algebra class as a caring teacher observes the capabilities of a recently arrived refugee boy and wonders how to grade and support him when they don’t share a language.

DEVELOPING A PATH TO COLLEGE FOR LATINO STUDENTS

The ENLACE Initiative of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Battle Creek, Michigan www.wkkf.org

In 1999, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation launched a national initiative to strengthen the educational pipeline for Latino youth and to increase the number of Latino high school and college graduates. Known as ENLACE or “Engaging Latino Communities for Education,” the initiative is designed to be a comprehensive, community-based collaborative effort among colleges and universities, public schools, businesses, and community organizations. The initiative supports 13 partnerships in seven states that provide a wide range of activities to keep Latino students engaged in education from preschool all the way through college. Although many projects are service oriented (e.g., tutoring and mentoring), the collaboration among educational institutions and community groups has facilitated changes in local and state educational policies.

The Kellogg Foundation is expected to contribute more than \$35 million to ENLACE by the end of 2007. While few foundations have the resources to undertake such a large project, the lessons learned and promising practices developed by ENLACE projects at the local level can inform other philanthropic efforts and be replicated on a smaller scale. This section includes several examples of promising projects that were developed by ENLACE partners. For more information, see reports and promising practices on the ENLACE website at www.wkkf.org.

15. Three separate ENLACE grants were provided in New Mexico: Albuquerque, Northern New Mexico, and Southern New Mexico. The shared goal of these programs is to empower the community, students, and educators in the state to work together to improve the public education system and increase student success. For more information, go to www.enlaceinnewmexico.com.

16. Carrillo-Cruz, Lynn. 2005. “ENLACE Los Compañeros Mentoring Program Evaluation Report.” Albuquerque, NM: ENLACE New Mexico.



© Minneapolis Public Schools Adult Basic Education Program

Los Compañeros Mentoring Program New Mexico ENLACE

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, a primary ENLACE project has been to develop a holistic, culturally relevant mentoring program to promote academic and personal success among middle and high school Latino students.¹⁵ Called the Los Compañeros, the program is open to all students but works primarily with youths who are having difficulty with school. Its goal is to improve their academic performance and help them plan for college.

Started in 2001, Los Compañeros program has trained Latino college and graduate students to provide one-on-one mentoring to middle- or high-school students. The mentor, who receives college work study, meets with the younger student on a daily basis to help improve school performance, as well as to assist with personal, emotional, and psychological challenges. While mentors spend about half of their time tutoring students on homework and basic skills, they also work with the students on improving interpersonal skills, intervene with teachers or school administrators as needed, and engage parents in their children’s education, including providing interpretation when meeting with teachers or school administrators. A recent evaluation of the program found

it had successfully helped students remain in school and improve their grades.¹⁶ Of the original cohort of 90 students who had started in the program during sixth grade, only four had dropped out by the end of the ninth grade. Depending on the school, between 47 and 72 percent of the original participants achieved a GPA that was at least equal to or higher than their entering GPA. The mentoring program also reduced behavior referrals and disciplinary actions and increased students’ academic expectations. The ENLACE staff attributes the program’s success to several factors:

- **Cultural competence.** The mentors come from the same community as the younger students and are bicultural and bilingual. They are aware of the challenges Latino students face and understand how to communicate with students and their families. These shared similarities make it easier for mentors to build the trust needed to play an important role in the lives of the youths.
- **Intensive mentoring.** Each mentor must spend a minimum of 20 hours per week in the program during the school year, with the majority of the time devoted to one-on-one interactions with students.



- **Working with the entire family.** Mentors are trained to work both with the individual students, as well as address the conditions in their families that inhibit learning and academic progress. Many of the mentors work closely with ENLACE Family Centers, staffed by Latino parents and community organizations, to provide families with the educational and social services needed to help their children succeed.

- **Collaboration.** Los Compañeros collaborates with educators at middle schools, high schools, and higher education institutions to address systemic issues and propose policies that can improve student learning (e.g., better school communications with LEP parents and supplemental educational instruction activities). By having representatives of local educational programs at the table, the ENLACE program helps students, parents, community members, and educators work together to address their shared interest in improving student performance.

Because the mentoring program is almost exclusively staffed by college work-study students, its other costs are low as \$128 per student annually or an average of \$0.70 per student per school day, according to the Los Compañeros project director.

The Santa Ana Partnership Santa Ana ENLACE Santa Ana, California

The Santa Ana Partnership—a collaboration of higher education institutions and the local school district—originally came together in 1983 in response to the rapidly changing demographics of the Santa Ana Unified School District. Recognizing that the school population was growing and becoming increasingly Latino and LEP, the Partnership developed educational policies and programs to address newcomer student needs. Over the years, Santa Ana schools have changed their curriculum and graduation requirements, expanded supplemental educational activities, and developed innovative parental involvement programs.¹⁶

Although the quality of education for immigrant children in the district has improved, finding ways to provide financial support for students who qualify for college but do not have the resources remains an ongoing challenge. This challenge is especially daunting for undocumented students who make up a significant segment of the Santa Ana school-age population. Most of these students came to the United States years ago as children; they grew up in this country, stayed in school, and worked hard to earn a high school degree.

If passed, the proposed bi-partisan legislation, known as the DREAM Act, will improve access to higher education for undocumented students.¹⁷ As this legislation is debated and even if it were to

pass, the Santa Ana Partnership recognizes that there needs to be financial resources to help these students access higher education.

For the Partnership, it is part of the larger problem of helping low-income immigrant students attend college even if they have very limited resources. As Sara Lundquist, Vice President of Santa Ana College and a coordinator of the local ENLACE project, stated, “We do not want youths to lose the opportunity to become professionals and become productive members of society... If they don’t go to college now, their lives could turn out dramatically different, and our communities will have lost out on an educated, promising group of young immigrants.”

To help raise resources for these college-qualified youths, the Santa Ana Partnership has developed fundraising programs and actively encourages businesses, foundations, and even small donors to contribute to privately funded scholarships and education funds that do not exclude individuals based on immigration status. As Ms. Lundquist explained, “These funds are not set aside for any particular group, but they allow all college-eligible students to compete based on their academic achievements and financial need.”

The Santa Ana Partnership has successfully worked with a growing number of local foundations and philanthropists to provide college scholarships to immigrant youths. While their specific goals vary, all of these funds are designed to supplement federal and state financial aid programs by helping students who otherwise cannot go to college. With few limited exceptions, these scholarships do not exclude students based on their immigration status. The local funds include:

- **Santa Ana 2000 Scholarship**, which was established by the City of Santa Ana, Santa Ana Unified School District, and Rancho Santiago Community College District’s Santa Ana College in

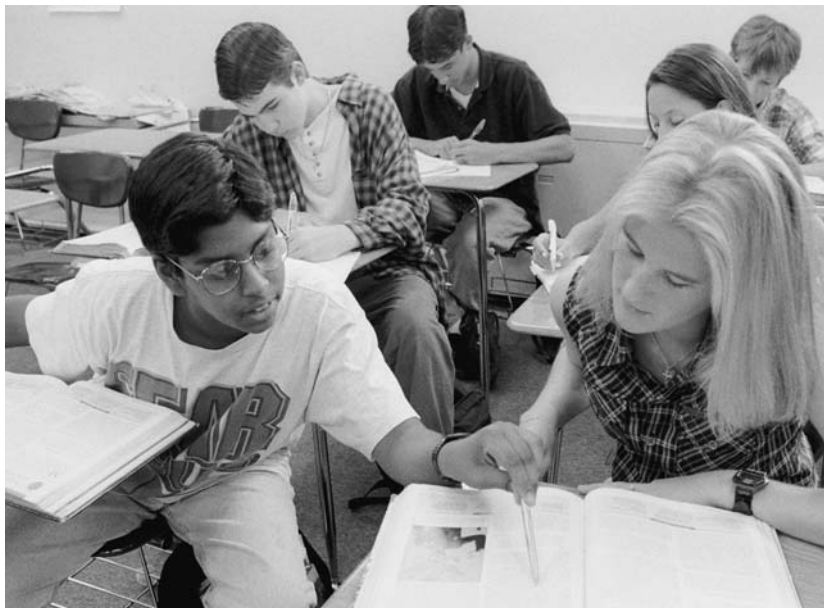
16. For more detailed description of the partnership accomplishments, go to www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/enlace/index.htm.

17. For more information about the DREAM Act, go to www.nilc.org/immlawpolicy/DREAM/index.htm.

THE DEVELOPMENT, RELIEF & EDUCATION FOR ALIEN MINORS (DREAM) ACT

At the national level, an estimated 65,000 students graduate from high school each year but are ineligible for financial aid because they are undocumented. The majority are young people who have lived in the U.S. most of their lives, having come to the United States with their parents when they were young. While they are ready to attend college, become professionals, and contribute to society, they face a number of barriers. They often do not have the financial resources to attend college, are unable to work because of their undocumented status, and live in fear of being detected by immigration officials.

A bipartisan supported bill, known as the DREAM Act, would provide immigration relief to these students if they attend college. The proposed law would allow students brought to the United States more than five years ago when they were 15-years old or younger, and can demonstrate good moral character, to apply for a conditional immigration status that would provide six years of legal residency. During the six-year period, they must (1) graduate from a two-year college, (2) complete at least two years towards a four-year degree, or (3) serve in the U.S. military for at least two years. Students who meet these requirements would be eligible to apply for permanent-residency status. A similar version of the bill, introduced in 2004, was sponsored by 48 U.S. Senators and 152 U.S. representatives, but as of spring 2006, neither the House nor the Senate has had a floor vote on this important bill.



1994 as part of an ambitious, long-term initiative to make higher education accessible to all local high school graduates via Santa Ana College. The city appropriated \$900,000 in seed money to launch the program, which is complemented by individual contributions from employees at the city, school district, and college. Approximately 50 scholarships are awarded annually, providing each student with \$1,000 over two years.

- **The Hispanic Education Endowment Fund**, which is a regional resource that provides scholarships for Latino students attending higher education institutions. Formed by a coalition of educational, community, faith-based, and business groups, and administered by the Orange County Community Foundation, it administers a portfolio of 28 sub-funds that makes approximately 350 scholarship grants totaling over \$700,000 annually.

- **The Santa Ana Education Fund**, which holds monies raised by the local school district to assist academically talented and motivated college students. Approximately \$100,000 in direct scholarship assistance is provided annually to the district's graduates.

- **The Santa Ana College Foundation** awards more than a quarter of a million dollars annually to incoming, continuing, and transferring Santa Ana College students who otherwise cannot afford to attend college.

As these fundraising efforts expand, the Santa Ana Partnership hopes to work through the ENLACE project to develop statewide models that leverage private sector resources to help bring higher education within the reach of more immigrant students.

LEVERAGING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

City College of San Francisco
San Francisco, California
www.ccsf.cc.ca.us

Community colleges are particularly important educational institutions for immigrant adults. They help integrate newcomers by providing English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) courses, vocational training, basic adult education, and access to other education opportunities. Research suggests that newcomers are 20 percent more likely than U.S.-born college students to begin their higher education experience at a community college.¹⁸ In many states, immigrants are rapidly becoming a large segment of the community college student population.

18. Woodlief, Blaze, Catherine Thomas, and Graciela Oroaco. 2003. *California's Gold: Claiming the Promise of Diversity in Our Community Colleges*. Oakland, CA: California Tomorrow.

Successful community colleges have responded to these demographic changes by developing new educational practices that help newcomers become self-sufficient and productive. These include:

- Providing targeted outreach, often in multiple languages, to inform newcomers of ESL, vocational programs, and other educational opportunities.
- Hiring bilingual staff in public contact positions, support programs, and counseling.
- Developing strong English acquisition programs and linking vocational training and educational programs so that newcomers can develop other skills as they are learning English.
- Providing class schedules and curricula that respond to the realities of working immigrants' lives.
- Developing programs and procedures that encourage immigrant students to pursue higher education opportunities (e.g., moving from ESL courses to vocational training, noncredit to credit classes, certificate to full-time study, and two-year to four-year institutions).
- Building partnerships with businesses, government agencies, and immigrant organizations to address the educational needs of this fast-growing community.

City College of San Francisco has been a national leader in providing innovative education to newcomers. With approximately 106,000 students, eight major campuses and over 150 classroom sites located in community centers, churches, public schools, and government offices, City College makes extensive efforts to have its educational programs be broadly available. About half of the students pursuing associate degrees are immigrants. Forty percent of City College's new students take the ESL placement test, and ESL is its largest department, with almost 25,000 students. To serve its large newcomer student population, City College has taken a number of steps to address their educational goals:

- **Developing curricula that address the needs of immigrant adults.** In addition to offering basic ESL classes, City College has been a national leader

in developing "bridge" programs that help immigrants progress toward their other educational or career goals while learning English. Many of its vocational training courses, for example, require only basic English skills, thereby allowing newcomers to develop job skills while enrolled in ESL. In addition, City College offers a large number of courses that integrate academic content or vocational training into ESL classes. These include ESL citizenship classes to help newcomers naturalize, intensive vocational ESL immersion courses to help low-income newcomers find mainstream employment, and occupational-specific vocational ESL programs that help immigrant workers prepare for jobs in the fields of health care, child care, construction, hotels, and the food industry. Recognizing that many immigrants already have valuable vocational skills, City College also works with community organizations and businesses to help foreign-born health workers, doctors, and engineers improve their English, obtain professional credentials, and receive training so that they can fully utilize their skills in the United States.

- **Providing courses that easily fit into the lives of immigrant workers.** Because many immigrant adults work long hours or multiple jobs, finding time to attend classes is often challenging. City College has made special efforts to "fit" their courses into the lives of immigrants by offering frequent evening and weekend classes and making them available at satellite campuses or community centers in neighborhoods where immigrants live or work. For instance, the college's Chinatown campus holds the largest group of ESL classes on Sunday mornings because many students work six days a week and cannot attend class at any other time. City College also tries to make it easier for ESL students to further their education and pursue certificates or degrees as they learn new skills by offering both noncredit and credit classes at most campuses.

- **Providing support to immigrant students.** City College's Learning Assistance Center provides academic support to all students but has specific

programs to address newcomer needs. Students who are enrolled in credit ESL classes are eligible for individual tutoring, and the Center serves almost 12,000 students annually. City College also holds regular ESL workshops, provides computer laboratories for students to learn and practice English and vocational skills, and offers career counseling.

- **Working with the local community to address immigrants' education needs.** A characteristic of City College that especially stands out is its willingness to collaborate with community organizations, government agencies, and businesses to address the community's education needs. As discussed in the "Promising Practices in English Acquisition" section of this toolkit, City College responded to large-scale closures of local garment factories in 2005 by collaborating with immigrant organizations and unions to re-train hundreds of displaced workers. Similarly, when a community health organization asked City College to help train bilingual workers, it initially created a course that taught students basic health terms so that they could work alongside professional medical staff. However, as the demand for bilingual health workers continued to increase in the Bay Area, the College developed both a certificate program for community health workers and a transfer program that allows bilingual students to earn up to a master's degree in public health. Many of these innovative programs require City College to seek funding from foundations, private donors, and other alternative sources. Private foundation grants received by City College for immigrant related program include The California Endowment and MetLife Foundation.

These programs have not only helped tens of thousands of newcomers improve their English and find better employment, but they have opened the door to advance education. The number of the college's ESL students who transfer to four-year colleges has increased 63 percent since 1999.

EVALUATING EDUCATION EFFORTS

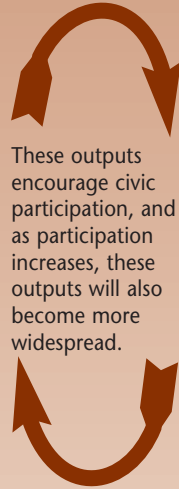
Education is crucial to immigrant integration because it helps put the immigrant on a path towards economic stability, which in turn allows the immigrant to have access to additional opportunities and resources.

Further, a good education from early childhood will better prepare children of immigrants for the next level of education and, eventually, post-secondary and higher education.

The following figure provides sample outputs and outcomes that funders can utilize to evaluate the effectiveness of education programs serving immigrant families.

OUTPUTS

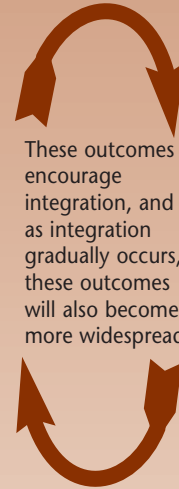
- Parent involvement.
- Parent/student bonding with school.
- Family norms that value education.
- Community support.
- Culturally competent educators.
- Academic support and appropriate curriculum for LEP students.
- Provision of high-quality college and career counseling.
- Access to scholarships and other opportunities and resources.
- Students' participation in extracurricular activities.



OUTCOMES

For all immigrants, regardless of immigration status:

- An inclusive school environment.
- Increased school readiness.
- Improved academic performance.
- Higher aspirations and hope.
- Increased access to higher education.



IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

EVALUATING EDUCATION EFFORTS

Indicators associated with school readiness among young immigrant children, improved academic achievement for immigrant children and youth of all ages, and higher aspirations for high school immigrant students include:

- Percentage of children with age-appropriate developmental skills and positive behaviors (e.g., little to no difficulty following directions, recognition of basic shapes and the relationship between letters and sounds).
- Improved standardized test scores and grades.
- Increased graduation rates (high school and college).
- Increased GED completion rate.
- Percentage of graduates going to vocational training programs or higher education institutions.

Examples of indicators associated with an inclusive school environment include:

- Percent of immigrant parent volunteers in school.

- Frequency of interaction between immigrant parents and their children's teachers.

- Percentage of immigrant parent who belong to the Parent Teacher Association or any parent associations and actively attend meetings.
- Events that celebrate academic achievement (e.g., graduation ceremonies) and role models among immigrant students and graduates.
- Inclusion of the culture and history of different immigrant groups in the school curriculum.
- Percentage of teachers who share the same cultural background or speak the same language as their immigrant students.
- Receipt of scholarships and other opportunities and resources among immigrant parents and students.

There are many ways to collect the above data, depending on what resources are available for the evaluation. For example, an evaluator could track grades, conduct a survey of immigrant parents to gauge their knowledge

of scholarships and other opportunities and resources available to their children, follow-up with immigrant students who sought post-secondary education and track their academic progress, or work with children and youth to document their hopes and aspirations.

SOURCES:

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Martinez, T.E. and Ted Wang. 2005. Supporting English Language Acquisition: Opportunities for Foundations to Strengthen the Social and Economic Well-Being of Immigrant Families. Sebastopol, CA: Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.