



NEWS RELEASE

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Latino Students Are Doing Better on State Reading and Math Tests but Gaps Remain Large, Particularly in States with Highest Number of Latino Students

Policy Changes Are Essential to Raise Achievement for Growing Latino Population

WASHINGTON—June 30, 2010—The performance of Latino students on state reading and math tests improved in most states between 2002 and 2008 at grades 4, 8, and the high school grade assessed for the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, according to a new analysis of test results by the Center on Education Policy (CEP). But as a group, Latino students continue to achieve well below Asian American and white students on state tests.

The study, *Improving Achievement for the Growing Latino Population is Critical to the Nation's Future*, summarizes key results for Latino students on the state tests used for accountability under NCLB. CEP analyzed 2008 state test results, as well as trends since 2002 in the Latino-white achievement gap and in the percentages of Latino students reaching various achievement levels. Their findings were drawn from test data, gathered by CEP, from all 50 states.

According to the report, states with increases for Latino 4th graders since 2002 outnumbered states with decreases at the basic, proficient, and advanced achievement levels. Latino students have also improved achievement at grades 4, 8, and the tested high school at a fast enough rate to narrow gaps in the percentage reaching proficient in both reading and math in a large majority of the states with sufficient data. Mean test scores also showed that since 2002 gaps narrowed more often than they widened.

“These increases in test scores for Latino students are encouraging, but the achievement level of Latino students is nowhere near where it has to be,” said Jack Jennings, CEP’s president and CEO. “Latino students are the largest ethnic minority group in many states and are the fastest-growing nationally, and therefore it is crucial to improve achievement for these students.”

Despite gains, the Latino subgroup still remains among the lower-performing racial/ethnic subgroups on state tests. Across all states with adequate data, median percentages proficient for Latino students in reading and math in 2008 were well below those of the Asian and white subgroups. For example, in grade 8 math the medians were 55 percent for Latino students, compared with 86 percent for Asian students and 77 percent for white students. Latino students were somewhat above or similar to medians of African Americans at 46 percent and Native Americans at 54 percent.

In 2008, Latino students were the lowest-performing racial/ethnic subgroup in at least one subject/grade combination in 11 states with sufficient data for the study. The achievement for Latino students in 2008 was slightly more negative in the five states that together enroll more than 70 percent of the nation's Latino students, including California, Texas, Florida, New York and Arizona. In California, which has the highest Latino enrollments in the nation, Latino students were the lowest-performing subgroup in reading at all grade levels.

Consistent with the data reported by states for NCLB accountability, the patterns highlighted by CEP deal with the performance of Latino students in the aggregate. The diverse Latino American subgroup also includes many high-achieving students, as well as students representing the full range of achievement and income levels and many different nationality and cultural backgrounds.

“Latino students often come from poorer families and many of these students are learning English,” Jennings said, “Those problems must be addressed to improve the achievement of Latino students.”

The majority of Latino students come from economically disadvantaged families, and more than one-third are English language learners (ELLs). Policy actions to improve achievement for this subgroup must include improvements in instruction for ELLs and steps to address the challenges of poverty. Other possible actions include improving instruction and interventions in schools with high concentrations of Latino students, strengthening instruction and dropout prevention programs for Latino students who are struggling, and enhancing the cultural awareness and effectiveness of teachers who teach Latino children.

In review, below are key highlights to consider from the report:

- Since 2002, the percentage of Latino students reaching proficiency benchmarks on state tests has increased in most states in both reading and math across grades 4, 8, and the high school grade tested. Achievement gaps between Latino and white students have narrowed.
- The Latino subgroup was among the lower-performing racial/ethnic subgroups on state tests, with median achievement that was notably below Asian and white students, and somewhat above or roughly close to that of African American and Native American students, depending on the subject and grade level. Because Latino students are the largest ethnic minority group in many states and are the fastest-growing nationally, it is crucial to improve achievement for these students.
- In California, the state with the largest Latino enrollment, Latino students were the lowest-performing subgroup in reading.
- The majority of Latino students are from economically disadvantaged families, and more than one-third are English language learners. Policy actions to improve achievement for this subgroup must include improvements in instruction for ELLs and steps to address the challenges of poverty. Other possible actions include improving instruction and interventions in schools with high concentrations of Latino students.

To coincide with the release of this report, **CEP is also releasing two other reports that look at the performance of African American and Asian American students on state reading**

and math tests. To request copies of these reports, please contact Chloe Louvouezo. Other related research is available on CEP's Web site, www.cep-dc.org.

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Based in Washington, D.C., and founded in January 1995 by Jack Jennings, the Center on Education Policy is a national, independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. The Center does not represent any special interests. Instead the Center helps citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.