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THE LONG ROAD TOWARD EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR RURAL HISPANIC STUDENTS: NEW INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES FROM IDAHO

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The Rural Opportunities Consortium of Idaho (ROCI) was launched by the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation of Boise, Idaho during the summer of 2013. Since then, Bellwether Education Partners and a task force of experts led by Dr. Paul T. Hill have been working to foster a better understanding of the issues that affect rural education, inform policy discussions, and bring attention to the unique needs and circumstances of rural school children. A series of reports, published over the next year, will examine issues including migration, technology, human capital, economic development, postsecondary enrollment and persistence, and more. Papers will be posted online at www.rociidaho.com/research-publications.

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ABOUT ROCI • RURAL OPPORTUNITIES CONSORTIUM OF IDAHO



ROCI brings together some of the nation's best thinkers to conduct research on the challenges of rural education and identify innovations, programs, and models to address them. This effort informs a national body of work on rural education and explores implications for increasing the educational attainment and economic competitiveness of Idahoans and Americans.

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• INTRODUCTION •

One of the insights emerging from this analysis is that some rural school districts have done a very good job in serving their Hispanic students, although most are failing them.

Immigration from Mexico has, over the past two or three decades, dramatically changed the demographic and socioeconomic profile of agricultural communities throughout the United States. Idaho is one of these rural areas where Mexican migrant families first began to settle. Now, one in six of the students in the Idaho K-12 school system

are of Hispanic origin.¹ As in other rural areas of the US, the state's Hispanic population will continue to grow rapidly. The economic health of agribusiness—as well as the civic health of rural communities—rests on providing all rural students, including Hispanic children and youth, a solid foundation of 21st century skills and preparing them to build on this foundation to engage in lifelong learning. In this paper, we look at the persistent educational disparities experienced by rural Hispanic students and identify promising strategies to improve their educational experiences and outcomes—in Idaho, and in other rural communities throughout the US.

This analysis, coupled with insights from the relevant research on Hispanic students' school experiences and discussions with Idaho's Hispanic community leaders and educators, provides a basis for developing strategies to assure that rural education reform becomes, indeed, a rising tide that lifts all boats. One of the insights emerging

from this analysis is that some rural school districts have done a very good job in serving their Hispanic students, although most are failing them. Success is possible. The key to overcoming these longstanding disparities will be to identify, refine, and replicate the most promising and practical strategies. We conclude with recommendations for steps forward and practical initiatives.

DISPARITIES IN RURAL HISPANIC STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN THE UNITED STATES AND IDAHO

Although standardized assessments of student performance have limitations, they do provide a common framework for looking at education system performance. Idaho is very similar to other predominantly rural states in the nation, both in the composition of its rural student population (about 16 percent Hispanic vs. 13 percent nationally) and in its very limited success in responding to rural Hispanic students' learning needs.² But Idaho being average is not good news. National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) data show that dramatic disparities persist in educational outcomes for Hispanic and white students nationally and in Idaho, although the state has a lower proportion of English-language learners (ELLs) than rural areas of other agricultural states such as California, Florida, and North Carolina.³

NAEP shows that only one-third as many Hispanic as white 4th graders in Idaho are proficient in reading (13 percent vs. 38 percent).⁴ Fewer than half as many Hispanic as white 4th graders are proficient in mathematics (20 percent vs. 44 percent). By 8th grade, Hispanic students make notable gains in reading but fall further behind in math. At this point, there are similar disparities in science achievement, with 43 percent of white 8th graders and only 15 percent of Hispanic students proficient in science. Analyses of data from Idaho's own assessment system (ISAT), which is aligned to the state standards, are consistent with those from NAEP state-level data and make it possible to look specifically at rural school districts' performance.

Unfortunately, Hispanic student performance in Idaho (and nationally) falls further in high school and the Hispanic-white student performance gap widens at the higher grade levels. By 12th grade, only 19 percent of rural Idaho's Hispanic students are proficient in reading and only seven percent are proficient in mathematics. In contrast, by 12th grade, almost half (46 percent) of white students are proficient in reading and 28 percent are proficient in math.⁵

There are not only fewer Hispanic students who excel; there are also more whom the education system fails entirely. More than half (56 percent) of the Hispanic 12th graders in Idaho score in the very lowest NAEP achievement category, the “below basic” range, in mathematics while less than half as many of the white students (24 percent) score this low. The disparities are similar in reading—where more than one-third (37 percent) of the Hispanic students are in the “below basic” range while only 15 percent of the white students score so low. Much work will need to be done to decrease these clear-cut disparities. But the effort is worthwhile. Success in improving educational equity for Hispanic students—the largest ethnic minority in Idaho schools—can have a positive overall impact for other minorities as well.

• COMMUNITY CONTEXT: GROWING UP AS A HISPANIC CHILD IN RURAL AMERICA •

In developing effective responses to rural school systems' failure to provide equitable educational opportunities for rural Hispanic students, it is necessary to look beyond the obvious circumstances of widespread poverty, immigrant parents' limited schooling, limited English, and migrancy.

A real and relevant problem is the number of schools in rural communities in Idaho and other rural states, particularly those along the Eastern Seaboard, where the lack of adequate bilingual/bicultural staff and scarce funding make it difficult to provide individualized instruction or tutoring to English-language learners (ELLs). Current research dovetails with the insights of Hispanic community leaders, rural educators, parents, and students themselves, who argue that before school systems can understand and identify strategies to overcome chronic disparities in educational outcomes, they must look more deeply at sociopolitical context and the overarching challenges of preparing students for the 21st century workforce.

MOVING BEYOND A FOCUS ON MIGRANCY AS THE SOLE CAUSE OF EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

For almost half a century, the educational disadvantages experienced by rural Hispanic children, especially the children of farmworkers, were believed to stem from migrancy. Widespread public concern about the living and working conditions of migrant farmworkers led to the creation in the 1960s of the federal Migrant Education Program (MEP), a specialized compensatory education program meant to meet the needs of children who

moved from school to school. However, the view that migrant children's educational disadvantages stemmed primarily from migrancy was flawed from the start. In reality, the educational challenges they face are more closely linked to their experiences growing up as part of a rural underclass—as the first-, second-, and third-generation children of Mexican immigrant farmworkers.⁶

The mistaken belief that migrancy was the major (or only) problem faced by children from farmworker families has become an increasingly serious barrier to innovative education program design and implementation over the past decade.

The mistaken belief that migrancy was the major (or only) problem faced by children from farmworker families, the largest group in the rural Hispanic population, has become an increasingly serious barrier to innovative education program design and implementation over the past decade. As agricultural production labor needs and recruitment patterns have shifted, there are fewer migrant workers. At this point, only 16

percent of the farmworker families in the rural United States are migrants. Moreover, Idaho has relatively more settled farmworkers and fewer migrants than some other states.⁷ In practical terms, the political temptation to rely on the MEP as the only tool for addressing the educational disparities of rural Hispanic students has been problematic. Only 3,800 of the 44,000 rural Hispanic children in Idaho (about eight percent) have been identified as eligible for MEP services and only 1,825 (about four percent) have actually been provided MEP-funded services, in part because the cost of identifying program-eligible children is so high that there is not enough left over for service.⁸

• HOW MEXICO-US MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT HAS TRANSFORMED THE RURAL UNITED STATES AND IDAHO •

Community context has a large impact in shaping school systems' vision of education—what it's for, who it's for, and what its priorities should be. To adequately understand that context, it is necessary also to understand how each rural community's history has shaped both local perspectives on education and households' economic and social life. Throughout the rural United States, communities that two generations ago consisted of mostly white, small family farmers are now ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse.⁹ That diversity presents both challenges and opportunities.¹⁰

The immigrant population in predominantly rural states grew by more than half just in the decade from 1990 to 2000. It is not surprising that many local institutions, especially schools, are struggling to adapt.

Migration from rural communities in Mexico to agricultural communities in the United States has rapidly changed the face of rural America. Understanding the history of successive waves of Mexican migrants coming to work in US agriculture since World War II—and the resultant diversity within the rural Hispanic

population—is an important element in finding optimal educational strategies for serving rural Hispanic students. It is necessary also to appreciate the pace of change. The immigrant population in predominantly rural states grew by more than half just in the decade from 1990 to 2000.¹¹ It is not surprising that many local institutions, especially schools, are struggling to adapt.

After World War II, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington became part of a long-haul migrant circuit bringing crews of Mexican workers from the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas to the Northwest.¹² This was the result of increasing demand for seasonal workers in labor-intensive agricultural production, along with the exodus of young men and women who were reluctant to continue working their families' farms.¹³ There was, at the same time, some secondary migration to Idaho of long-established Hispanic families from rural Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico.

Ironically, just as the federal government initiated its Migrant Education Program in the mid-1960s, the long-haul migrant circuit became less viable; Texas-based migrants began to settle in agricultural communities with a high demand for farm labor, in California, Florida, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.¹⁴

Ongoing changes in agricultural labor demand in Idaho—for example, the shift from labor-intensive potato production to dairy production—has favored settlement and the slow diffusion of former farmworkers into other low-wage occupations. Although not all Hispanic families in rural Idaho are farmworkers and few are migrants, farmworkers continue to be the core of rural Hispanic communities. Many settled in Idaho decades ago and are now bilingual, some are in transition, and others are newly arrived migrants. Currently, although four out of five rural Hispanic students are US-born about half live in a household with an immigrant parent.¹⁵

• PROFILE OF FARMWORKER FAMILIES IN THE RURAL UNITED STATES AND IDAHO •

Household life and parents' engagement in their children's education are major factors shaping children's school experiences and educational outcomes. Understanding farmworker and other rural Hispanic families is, therefore, crucial to understanding the educational challenges children in these families face and finding effective strategies to overcome them.

The shift in the demographic and socioeconomic profile of farmworker families in the United States has been analyzed in some detail over the past 20 years.¹⁶ The composition of rural agricultural communities throughout the country is best understood in terms of migration history. The Hispanic population in rural Idaho, for example, can be classified as part of a mature migrant network, making it quite similar to those in Midwestern states such as Michigan and Illinois. By contrast, areas in Eastern Seaboard states such as Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina have much shorter histories of migration and settlement.

HOME LANGUAGE IN RURAL HISPANIC HOUSEHOLDS

In agricultural communities throughout the rural United States and in Idaho, most farmworker parents are foreign-born while most of their children (about 78 percent) are US-born.¹⁷ Therefore, although most rural Hispanic students in Idaho are English-dominant or bilingual, many are growing up in households where English is not spoken well, often, or at all.¹⁸ About one-sixth of the rural Hispanic children in Idaho live in households of recently arrived immigrants, where neither children nor parents speak much English.

Although most rural Hispanic students in Idaho are English-dominant or bilingual, many are growing up in households where English is not spoken well, often, or at all.

Most of these foreign-born farmworker parents first came to the United States as young adults to work after dropping out of school in Mexico. Even those who have lived many years in the US have little schooling and have learned only some English (since there are limited opportunities in rural

communities for working adults or stay-at-home mothers to learn English). This not only compromises parents' communication with their children's teachers but sometimes also limits conversation between parents and their children, since some of the children grow up limited in Spanish.

IMMIGRATION STATUS IN RURAL HISPANIC HOUSEHOLDS AND IMPLICATIONS

Three-quarters of the foreign-born farmworkers in the US agricultural labor force have lived in the United States for 10 or more years.¹⁹ But only half of them have legal immigration status—even though they have lived most of their lives in, and most of their children have been born in, the United States. In typical agricultural communities, one or both parents in about one-third of farmworker households lack status.²⁰ This affects their children's schooling both directly and indirectly. Lack of legal status has a direct, negative impact on household heads' earnings. Constraints on low-income immigrant families' eligibility for crucial public health programs (e.g., Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) also affect the well-being of the children in a household.²¹ Parents, mothers in particular, may be unable to drive or reluctant to drive without a license, making it difficult to get to meetings with their children's teachers or school principals.

The most serious problems are those faced by the children—one out of five in the rural Hispanic immigrant population—who lack legal status themselves. Although children's awareness of their own legal status emerges at different stages in their development, most are in middle school when they come to appreciate the difficulties they face in going on to college without federal financial assistance, which is limited to citizens and legal permanent residents. This realization dampens the motivation of many.²²

RURAL HISPANIC PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND EXPERIENCES

Foreign-born farmworker parents have typically dropped out of elementary school or middle school, while US-born farmworker parents are more often high school dropouts. Overall, about half of farmworker adults (54 percent) have eight years or fewer of schooling. The foreign-born parents who dropped out of elementary or middle school often have virtually no experience with learning to learn, which constrains their ability to help their children in school. Many of those who grew up in the United States are likely to have had problematic experiences in school. These, inevitably, affect their interactions with their children's teachers and school administrators.

These are important considerations in assessing farmworker parents' ability to meaningfully support their children in their education. Educators in Idaho, and throughout the rural United States, point to lack of parental engagement as a major

Overall, about half of farmworker adults (54 percent) have eight years or fewer of schooling.

problem. But there is not yet adequate awareness or reflection among educators regarding the multiple barriers that even motivated parents face as they seek to participate fully in their children's schooling.

PREVALENCE OF POVERTY AMONG RURAL HISPANIC FAMILIES

Nationally, and in Idaho, about half of rural Hispanic families live in poverty.²³ Farmworker families with children are probably the poorest, but even the Hispanic families who have moved out of farm work into nonagricultural work are concentrated in low-wage occupations. Just as problematic is that rural Hispanic households' cash flow is uneven since most jobs are, to some extent, seasonal. Moreover, plant closures or changes in cropping patterns can disrupt income for communities of farmworkers.²⁴

A NEGLECTED POPULATION: OUT-OF-SCHOOL WORKING YOUTH

Nationally, there are about 200,000 teenagers working on farms, and almost all are school dropouts. Nearly half are recent arrivals—young migrants from Mexico who dropped out of elementary or middle school and came north on their own to work in agriculture. Other out-of-school youth came north with their immigrant parents but dropped out of school—some by the age of 14 or 15—to work. For most of these teenagers, it is not feasible to return to school full time, because they need to work to support themselves and their families. Very few agricultural communities have tried to make alternative adult education programs available to them; Idaho has, but service levels are still very low.

• NUMBERS AND DISTRIBUTION OF HISPANIC CHILDREN IN THE RURAL UNITED STATES AND IDAHO •

Nationally, we estimate there are more than two million Hispanic children living in rural communities across the country.²⁵ At least half of them are the children of farmworkers. Almost half of the nation's farmworkers live in California, Oregon, Washington, or Florida, but Hispanic farmworkers and other immigrants are now dispersed widely throughout the rural United States.

In Idaho, there are about 44,000 Hispanic children in rural communities, about one-third of whom live in farmworker family households.²⁶ The highest concentrations of farmworker children in the United States live in areas classified as fringe rural. Idaho is typical in this regard, with rural Hispanics concentrated in agricultural communities along the Snake River and in the Treasure Valley rather than in the most remote rural areas.²⁷ Although these communities are not as geographically isolated as those in remote rural areas, they typically have a fragile economic and institutional infrastructure.

The concentration of Hispanic children in rural agricultural communities rather than in remote rural areas has important implications for education. Initiatives to improve educational opportunities need not be implemented everywhere; they can be targeted

Initiatives to improve educational opportunities need not be implemented everywhere; they can be targeted to communities where there are high concentrations of Hispanic and immigrant children.

to communities where there are high concentrations of Hispanic and immigrant children. In rural Idaho, for example, Hispanic students are concentrated in only 40 school districts, less than one-third of all the districts in the state. Nonetheless, because of the diversity of these rural school districts—in terms of

size, concentration of Hispanic students, and proportion of Hispanic students who are limited in English—a single “cookie-cutter” approach to improving students’ educational experience would not be optimal. The most promising strategies will need to be tailored to local circumstances. District-by-district analysis of ISAT data shows that even districts with higher than average Hispanic student enrollment can develop sound local strategies.

• UNDERSTANDING RURAL HISPANIC STUDENTS' SCHOOL PERFORMANCE •

Although there is a great deal of evidence showing that race and ethnicity are significantly correlated with educational achievement, the research literature makes it clear that multiple factors—some institutional, some contextual—interact to create barriers to educational success for children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families.

MULTIGENERATIONAL ASSIMILATION, EDUCATIONAL MOTIVATION, AND ATTAINMENT

The process of immigrant integration is really one of mutual adaptation. Immigrants inevitably learn to adapt to life in American communities, but communities must also learn to adapt to new immigrant populations.²⁸ And although communities and families do adapt and evolve, immigrant integration is a gradual, multigenerational transformation. This is a fundamental underlying reason for continuing educational disparities among Hispanic children, one that is particularly relevant to rural communities because their demographic transformation has been so rapid.

Understanding the education gap between rural Hispanic and white students in Idaho, and finding solutions to narrow it, means recognizing that each generation of Hispanic immigrants faces distinct challenges.

It is not surprising to learn that newly arriving Mexican immigrant students encounter problems in adapting to their new schools. However, it turns out that the educational problems experienced by children from immigrant families are multigenerational, with second-, third-, and even fourth-generation Mexican

American children lagging behind their white peers. Understanding the education gap between rural Hispanic and white students in Idaho, and finding solutions to narrow it, means recognizing that each generation of Hispanic immigrants faces distinct challenges.

Particularly relevant to Idaho is the fact that second-generation Mexican immigrant children—Mexican Americans born and raised in the United States—don't do as well as might be expected. Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco explain the faltering success of second- and third-generation Mexican American children as follows: "The energy and faith directed toward 'making it' that are characteristics of the...immigrant students seem to have significantly diminished by the second generation."²⁹ Finding optimal strategies to improve rural Hispanic students' educational success lies in responding to distinctive generational needs.

Newcomers' Educational Trajectory in the K-12 School System

Current research provides valuable clues for developing nuanced, well-articulated strategies aimed at nurturing success. Foreign-born students who grow up in the United States follow diverse trajectories through the education system. Unfortunately, the overall trajectory of foreign-born Mexican students in the US school system trends downward.³⁰ Idaho is no exception in this regard: the disparities in indicators of educational performance separating limited-English proficient (LEP) students from white students are extreme.³¹

Idaho's state test results (ISAT) show that, in the primary school grades, 86 percent of white students score in the proficient-advanced range, compared with only 57 percent of the LEP students. At the high school level, the educational gap widens further. Overall LEP student performance is even lower, with only 23 percent scoring in the proficient-advanced range; in contrast, 72 percent of white students score in that range.³² It is likely that many English-language learners continue to have subtle constraints on their ability to deploy their English skills in writing and reading even after they are re-classified as English-proficient.

Multiple Factors That Interact to Affect Newcomers' Educational Success

In addition to family factors associated with compromised school success (parents' education, employment, and English language proficiency), a range of psychological factors affect newly arrived immigrant students' engagement with school, including emotional well-being, attitudes toward school, and conflicting cultural values.³³ Their interactions with teachers and peers, in turn, affect their cognitive engagement (excitement about learning and curiosity about newly learned concepts and subject content). This insight has policy and practical implications because it identifies pressure points for effecting change as well as for decreasing education disparities.³⁴

• IDAHO RURAL SCHOOLS' CURRENT SERVICE TO HISPANIC STUDENTS •

Two aspects of schools' service to students are particularly relevant, both to education policy and to practical efforts toward system improvement: schools' objective success in helping students develop the skills they need, and their success in assuring equitable opportunities for all students. The proportion of students in a district scoring in the "advanced" range can be seen as an indicator of students' opportunities to excel, while the proportion scoring in either the proficient or advanced range can be seen as an indicator of adequacy. Figure 1 shows the range of district performance on these indicators.

Figure 1 communicates both bad news and good news. The bad news is that, in general, rural Hispanic students do not do nearly as well as rural white students. Moreover, the problem is not simply that Hispanic students attend lower-performing schools. Hispanic students within each district generally do not fare as well as their white counterparts within each district—both the high-performing ones and the lower-performing ones.

At the same time, the wide range of school district performance shows that at least some schools are doing well (in some or all grades) in meeting Hispanic students' learning needs. A reasonable first step in strategic efforts to improve educational outcomes for the state's rural Hispanic students will be to look in some depth at the approaches high-performing districts are taking to assure educational equity and solid academic results.

• Figure 1 •

DISPARITIES IN IDAHO RURAL SCHOOL SERVICE TO HISPANIC STUDENTS

Performance Indicators	Statewide ISAT Performance		District ISAT Performance Range		
	WHITE	HISPANIC	HISPANIC		
	Average: All Grades		All Grades	Primary School	High School
Excellence Percentage of students scoring in the advanced range in English language arts and math	41%	20%	6%-53%	9%-67%	4%-47%
Adequacy Percentage of students scoring in the proficient or advanced range in English language arts and math	81%	64%	18%-97%	36%-97%	18%-81%

THE PROBLEM OF HISPANIC STUDENT PERFORMANCE DECLINING IN HIGH SCHOOL

Rural Hispanic students' ISAT scores are typically higher in the primary grades than in middle school or high school. Statewide, about three-quarters (73 percent) of Hispanic students in the primary grades achieve ISAT scores in the proficient-advanced range, decreasing to 67 percent in middle school and 50 percent in high school. Although white students' ISAT scores also decrease, the proportional gap between Hispanic and white students in the proficient-advanced range rises from 13 percent in primary school to 20 percent in high school.³⁵ A practical reason for concern about this pattern is that a graduating high school student's skills inventory and knowledge have a considerable bearing on future educational and workplace success.

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO HISPANIC STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Using Idaho's ISAT assessment data and summary information on district characteristics—such as district size and the percentage of students classified as Hispanic, free/reduced lunch eligible, LEP, or migrant—we analyzed Hispanic student performance in rural districts to see which patterns might emerge. These insights may be directly relevant to the design of an effective strategy to foster educational equity for Hispanic students.

Correlates of Hispanic Students' Academic Performance in a District

Hispanic students' academic performance in the primary grades is unrelated to the proportion of Hispanic students in the district, although in the middle and high school grades their performance is inversely related to that proportion. What *is* a significant statistical correlate of overall Hispanic student performance in the primary grades is the proportion of students classified as being limited English proficient (LEP). As might be expected, the scores of Hispanic students were lower in districts with higher proportions of LEP students.³⁶

Correlates of Migrant and Limited-English Student Performance in Rural Districts

There are relatively few migrant and limited-English Hispanic students in Idaho's rural schools.³⁷ Significant subpopulations of migrant students are found in less than half of the rural school districts with concentrations of Hispanic students. Nonetheless, it is interesting to observe that migrant students in the small school districts do much better in the primary grades, whereas those in the larger school districts do much better at the high school level.

Migrant students in Idaho's small school districts do much better in the primary grades, whereas those in the state's larger districts do much better at the high school level.

This may well be explained by the fact that the younger migrant students and their families benefit from the more individualized attention small districts offer in the primary grades, while the more diverse resources available at the high school level in larger districts make a real difference.³⁸

There are limited-English proficient (LEP) students in almost all of the rural school districts where there are high concentrations of Hispanic students. On average, slightly more than one-third (36 percent) of the Hispanic students in these districts are classified as LEP, but the proportions vary greatly between districts—ranging from 16 percent to 82 percent of Hispanic student enrollment. It is likely that recency of migration, as well as family/household language environment, play a major role in determining outcomes. However, this issue cannot be adequately examined in the overall ISAT school reporting data because there are no data about the extent of English-language limitations or home language environment for the students who are classified as LEP, and some who are not classified as LEP may live in households where English is seldom spoken.³⁹

Concentration of Hispanic Students in Relation to Overall Academic Performance in a District

The overall performance of rural school districts cannot rise without improving outcomes for Hispanic students. Districts with higher proportions of Hispanic students do not do as well as those with fewer Hispanic students. The regression model for overall district-level academic performance is robust, explaining 27 percent of the variance in districts' average scores for **all** students (at all grade levels),⁴⁰ 51 percent of the variance in overall performance in the primary grades⁴¹, and 50 percent of the variance in middle grades.⁴² However, the model does not explain variance in overall high school performance.

Practical Implications of District-Level Correlates of Hispanic Student Academic Performance

The fact that the district-level systemic factors explain only a modest proportion of the variance in academic outcomes for Hispanic students is actually quite good news. It confirms the earlier observation that there is a broad range in different school districts' and individual schools' ability to successfully serve their Hispanic students. This, in turn, suggests that it is possible to identify viable pressure points for replicating success.

School district size cannot be used as an excuse for poor performance, given that some smaller districts do as well as or better than large districts. Nor are high concentrations of Hispanic students an excuse, because some, if not all, districts with high proportions of Hispanic students are doing well in serving them.

It is intriguing to discover that the proportion of Hispanic students in a district is unrelated to Hispanic student outcomes in the primary grades, but that ethnic concentration becomes a significant factor by middle school and high school. This underscores the desirability of focusing less on elementary school, where learning is oriented toward development of foundation skills in language arts and mathematics, and more on middle and high school, where students embark on their journey toward workforce preparation and overall socialization.

We now turn to considering in greater depth a question of both theoretical and practical importance: "How can school districts with high proportions of Hispanic students help them do better in middle school and high school?" Surely, there must be an NCLB policy that incorporates the realization that, although investment in early learning is important, the race to the top is a marathon. Idaho's modest success in responding to rural Hispanic students' learning needs in elementary school is tragically compromised by the fact that these same students fall behind in later grades, just as they are preparing to move into the workforce and take on the responsibilities of managing their own and their families' lives in an increasingly information-oriented world.

• IMPLICATIONS: ROUTES TO IMPROVING RESULTS FOR IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND YOUTH •

OVERVIEW

Rural educators' and Hispanic community activists' analysis of the educational challenges faced by Hispanic students currently focuses on three major issues: the need to foster parental engagement, the need to provide effective help to limited-English students, and the lack of bilingual/bicultural staff. These concerns are justified, but it will also be necessary to devise innovative and practical new strategies because the political landscape of education in Idaho, and in other rural areas of the United States, is generally politically conservative. Dollar-intensive solutions are not likely to be attractive (see Hill and Sperry's recent paper on the politics of rural education)⁴³—especially if funding is seen as providing Hispanic students with special opportunities that are not available to others.

Schools must look beyond the useful but modest technical objective of hiring more bilingual/bicultural teachers and improving instructional practice. An analysis of why the education system status quo is not working for Hispanic students in the United States and in rural Idaho will need to examine schools' broader responsibility to foster community development. Decision-makers and community leaders will need to consider how schools will prepare Hispanic students for upward mobility in the labor force and as informed and vocal participants in the civic and political affairs of their community.

Examining how schools function within the overall rural community may lead to strategies that can launch them into a newly expanded role: that of creating community in rural areas.

Education policy analyst Henry Levin focused on schools as communities of learners in establishing the basis for a new, more dynamic vision of the proper roles of teachers and students.⁴⁴ In rural America, it will be necessary to go still further. Examining how schools function within the *overall*

rural community may lead to strategies that can launch them into a newly expanded role: that of *creating* community in rural areas.⁴⁵

We identify some promising initiatives, or pressure points, as components in an overall strategy to improve educational equity in rural Idaho and elsewhere in rural America. Underlying our suggested strategies is the recognition that social capital can be harnessed as a resource for improving rural education, even in communities with a limited tax base. This recognition is crucial to Hispanic students' educational success, but will benefit all rural students. Key components in an overall strategy include the following:

- Coordinated initiatives to build students' career awareness
- Developing 21st century skills through community service
- New approaches to nurturing parents' engagement in their children's education
- Demolishing school walls through dropout recovery and adult learning programs
- Improved support for dual-language learners, including dual-immersion programs
- Repurposing the federal Migrant Education Program

BUILDING STUDENTS' CAREER AWARENESS

The K-12 school system has traditionally devoted few resources to engaging students in an exploration of the world of work, in part because it is assumed that this process takes place through parents' social networks—for example, working summer jobs in their parents' and parents' friends' businesses. But for farmworker children, whose parents, co-workers, and neighbors have limited social networks, this policy of benign neglect is bound to fail. Informal networks of family and friends may, at best, provide some rural Hispanic youth the chance to drive a forklift in a warehouse, toil in a fast-food restaurant, or work in construction; for the rest, the pathway leads straight toward work in the fields or in a processing/packing shed.

Our recommendations build on significant progress in federal development of enhanced career orientation resources (e.g., O*Net-based online resources for exploring aptitudes, abilities, and preparation requirements in different occupations; private-public collaboration in developing industry competency models; career pathways with stackable credentials) as well as on several decades of field experience with service-learning programs. Efforts led by states with large rural Hispanic populations, such as Florida and Texas, show that it is indeed feasible to strengthen rural career-technical education networks and college-bound programs. The main challenges now are to engage high schools and middle schools so as to begin the process earlier and to devote adequate time and energy to this crucial facet of learning.⁴⁶ This is especially important for rural Hispanic students for whom the fork in the career road—toward either lifelong advancement or dead-end low-skill employment—comes early.

CAREER COUNSELING, ORIENTATION, AND EXPLORATION

Counseling

The foundations for developing sound career awareness must first be built in middle school, and then nurtured and refined in high school. Leaving the issue of the school-to-work transition until the last minute (e.g. in 11th grade) only wastes school resources and confuses students. The notion of just in time career counseling is, in fact, just too late. Although the Migrant Education Program includes valuable components such as the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) and College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), designed to contribute to rural Hispanic students' successful transition to post-secondary education, they are underfunded—and the intervention comes too late for most students.

Leaving the issue of the school-to-work transition until the last minute only wastes school resources and confuses students. The notion of just in time career counseling is, in fact, just too late.

A narrow vision of counseling in rural high schools has relegated school counselors to the role of traffic cop, in which they merely guide students' enrollment in a sensible sequence of courses. Counselor caseloads do not permit the individualized dialogue needed to provide effective guidance—particularly for those low-income

rural Hispanic students who start off with a limited awareness of the full spectrum of possibilities. Improved counselor: student ratios are crucial to making guidance effective. School funding formulas could feasibly be adjusted to assure increased funding for counseling—for example, by providing schools performance-based funding incentives for achieving measurable improvements in outcomes. Rural students currently rely on teachers as much or more than on counselors and, even with minimal guidance, seek out online information to help in their college and career decisions. However, it is not yet clear what the optimal mix of activities to help students is. Different schools may well find different approaches to provide sound advice to their students so incentives should be team-oriented, rewarding schools for improvements in helping students transition to post-secondary education and rewarding careers.

Collaboration to Support Career Exploration

A further modest step in the area of career orientation and counseling will be to expand and improve K-12 school systems' collaboration with other organizations concerned about workforce preparation—namely local businesses, workforce development programs, and civic clubs. High schools' coordination with the US Department of Labor's National Farmworker Jobs Program, whose grantees have special expertise in serving farmworker families, is very weak in most rural agricultural areas of the country, and specifically in Idaho.⁴⁷

Schools' collaboration with local businesses may be even more important than better collaboration in the public sector. Unfortunately, there is a tendency for rural communities to adopt a deficit model in assessing their resources, leading them to argue, "There's nothing here—no opportunities for local residents to contribute to students' learning about careers." But even rural communities have local health care

professionals, lawyers, school administrators, business owners, managers, and supervisors in small and medium-size local businesses. All can contribute to the collective career education endeavor. They can illuminate students' understanding of the range and complexity of tasks each confronts daily in the workplace, and offer insight into the positive (and negative) aspects of a particular occupation. Local presenters and mentors in all walks of life can build students' appreciation as to how critical thinking, communication, math, reading, and writing skills are required in even the most mundane jobs.

Helping Students Develop a Full-Spectrum Vision of Career Options

Rural Hispanic students have not been well served by educators' emphasis on a narrow set of demanding, high-visibility career paths for their most promising students, such as doctor, lawyer, and physicist. Unfortunately, this propensity is usually coupled with the practice of steering those who are not doing well in school toward an equally limited set of low-skill, low-wage occupations. In this oversimplified mapping of post-secondary options, it is daunting for most Hispanic students to gauge the best fit for their individual interests and aptitudes amid a dizzying array of career possibilities.

One of the most profound changes in the 21st century world of work is the emergence of well-paid, intellectually demanding, and financially rewarding technical occupations. There is burgeoning demand for workers in middle-skill professions, which generally require some education and training beyond high school but less than a bachelor's degree.⁴⁸

Health care is a good example of a large and rapidly growing industry where improved guidance and an emphasis on middle-skill occupations can pay off. The industry relies increasingly on case managers, health education paraprofessionals, and imaging technicians, as well as rehabilitation specialists for an aging population. This is particularly significant for Hispanic students since bilingualism is a valuable job qualification for many employees in rural community health clinics, hospitals, and specialized service providers. There is similar demand in a broad range of other service occupations.

Moreover, too many rural schools have ignored abundant opportunities to link academic foundation skills development to the competencies required for the agricultural workforce. Agribusiness is being transformed, globally, nationally, and in Idaho, by new technologies. Integrated pest-management techniques, for example, incorporate systematic collection and analysis of statistical data. Marketing and production strategies require online monitoring and analysis of global market news, coupled with local monitoring of crop conditions and weather. Upward mobility within agriculture

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may well be accessible to rural Hispanic students, particularly since bilingualism is always a plus. But that upward trajectory of career advancement requires a solid academic foundation. Local agribusiness managers and farm owners can and should come into the classroom to tell students about their industry.

Rural schools in Idaho can begin to address the challenge of career orientation affordably—relying primarily on community social capital and existing instructional materials and resources. All that’s needed is a commitment—and no excuses.

Work Experience and Internships for Building Career Awareness

If schools commit themselves to involving local businesses in classroom education about career options, they should go a step further and ask those businesses to offer student internships. Expanding the range of workplace internships for middle school and high school students provides a learning context that is not easily reproduced in the classroom: experiential learning coupled with expert advice from co-workers, supervisors, and business owners.⁴⁹

The evidence shows that social and conceptual engagement with schooling is important. So, too, is strengthening rural Hispanic students’ understanding of the ways in which the core traditional school curriculum relates to the social environment of the workplace—thereby building their motivation to persevere and excel in the academic realm.

Relying on Role Models to Enhance Student Aspirations and Career Exploration

Lack of engagement with schools is a major factor in diminished student outcomes, and notably so for Hispanic students. Structured approaches to strengthening involvement with their teachers and peers (social engagement) and with curriculum content (conceptual engagement) are synergistic. This can foster a virtuous spiral of ever-increasing educational success, self-esteem, self-confidence, effort, and intellectual risk-taking.⁵⁰

For rural Hispanic students, exposure to outstanding role models is particularly important; without it, they have few opportunities to gain a vivid sense of what's required for success in diverse careers. Meeting, talking with, and learning about community leaders can introduce them to new perspectives. Narratives of the process of getting ahead in the world can catalyze their thinking about promising occupations and show them how to pursue unfamiliar career pathways.

Drawing on Local Resources and Civic-Minded Hispanic Community Leaders

Rural schools can undertake various practical and affordable initiatives to enhance Hispanic students' interaction with positive role models, but have been unwilling to adequately prioritize such efforts. Sergio Gutierrez, chief judge of the Idaho Court of Appeals and a prominent Hispanic community leader, observed, "Individual teachers invite Hispanic leaders to make class presentations, but the schools' approach is not systematic enough." Judge Gutierrez noted that he has been, from time to time, invited to schools in the area where he lives, but not often to schools with concentrations of Hispanic students elsewhere in the state.

Judge Gutierrez also reminds us that a role model's personal narrative is the key to creating a lasting impact on students. His personal narrative and career trajectory—cutting asparagus in California's Delta region as a teenage farmworker, migrating to Idaho, getting a GED through his participation in a Job Corps program, earning a law degree, and eventually becoming a judge—don't simply communicate an abstract rhetorical message of "Si se puede!" His story reminds low-income Hispanic students that people from humble families can prevail. At the same time, it signals (quite accurately) that upward mobility along any career path includes encounters with adversity, requires persistence, and may take unexpected turns.

Fame is not a prerequisite for powerful role models. A broad range of Hispanic leaders and activists in rural (and non-rural) Idaho communities can connect in an authentic, personal way with students. Their personal narratives can convey the core message that diverse pathways are feasible, and that self-reflection is an essential part of navigating education and careers.

Although direct personal contact and interactive conversation is ideal, other learning modalities can be used to supplement direct contact and introduce students to role models—for example, documentary videos, directed reading assignments, and career-oriented learning projects that include student review of biographical material on leaders in diverse areas of endeavor. Jose Hernandez, the first Mexican American astronaut and the son of migrant farmworkers, has, for example, established a foundation, Reaching for the Stars, which includes materials that build on his fame as an astronaut to encourage Hispanic and other rural students to pursue STEM careers.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: PROJECT-BASED LEARNING TO BUILD 21ST CENTURY CIVIC SKILLS

More than two decades of intensive experience in designing and implementing community service programs has shown that service-learning, like other project-based learning activities, makes a dramatic contribution. Service-learning activities not only help to develop students' communication skills, analytic thinking, and ability to use information resources effectively, they also provide a venue for career exploration.⁵² It is no surprise that the community service programs with the greatest impact on participants' learning and skills development are team-based, expect students to be responsible for managing projects, and address a significant community problem.

Community Service as Career Exploration

Schools' adoption and expansion of service-learning programs can contribute not only to educational equity for Hispanic students but also to social equity in rural communities where there are longstanding ethnic and/or occupational divisions. Their community service activities communicate the message to the community at large that Hispanic residents are valuable civic resources and potential future community leaders. It is particularly important that Hispanic students who seek to articulate their own personal identity have opportunities to think of themselves as future leaders; otherwise, the unspoken message—heard at full volume by immigrants—is that they are to occupy only their proper lower-status niche in society.

The Latinos in Action Regional Initiative: A Promising Model

Community leaders in Idaho are currently working to promote a service-learning model, Latinos in Action. Initially developed in Utah, Latinos in Action is a vehicle for bringing service learning to high schools with high Hispanic enrollment. It is now in place in one

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Idaho rural school district, Jerome, where about half the students are Hispanic.⁵³ The program is embedded in a leadership class at the middle school or high school level; participants learn leadership skills while being trained and supervised as they provide community service.

The strategic approach is sophisticated, highlighting the value of bilingualism while designing program guidelines that strengthen student aspirations to go on to college. The programs' service activities are configured to build community

recognition and student self-esteem by addressing genuine community needs and building on students' existing skills.

One of the service modalities, for example, is elementary school tutoring wherein junior high and high school participants tutor younger students in language arts and mathematics. Not only do they make a real contribution to younger students' learning and attitudes about learning, but they also strengthen their own skills—all while gaining opportunities to reflect on the challenges of learning to learn. Many Latinos in Action student participants also receive training that allows them to serve as interpreters during parent-teacher conferences. This helps them to both improve their language skills and increase their cultural awareness.

The University of Idaho's Alternative 4-H Program Model of Community Service

Another promising approach to service-learning for rural Hispanic students is an adaptation of standard 4-H activities that meaningfully engages Hispanic farmworker junior high and high school youth in community service. The students become volunteer staff in an after-school learning and nutrition program serving about 80 farmworker children in elementary school.⁵⁴ There are costs involved in implementing the program—for program coordination, stipends for the student volunteers, and food for the children served by the project—but they are modest.

Talking with the student volunteers, one is struck immediately by their self-confidence and level of engagement. One student volunteer is Juan Duran, a high school senior who knew almost no English when he entered school. Although Juan is a good student, and already knows he is interested in becoming an elementary school teacher, his experience in the 4-H program has catapulted him forward by providing him a firsthand, real-world sense of what's involved in teaching. As a result, he has begun to focus on children's reading skills because he observed that this was an area in which they were having difficulty. Two younger student volunteers from farmworker families, Maritza and Lorena, help prepare food and supervise the younger children. They explained how helpful the program coordinator, Lilibian, had been in mentoring them—talking informally with them from time to time about their aspirations, and issues that arose in school. Lorena, now 14, is currently thinking that she wants to pursue a career in neurobiology, or perhaps pediatrics. Both young women have become excellent students.

It doesn't seem a coincidence that these three students, working as 4-H program volunteers, are highly motivated, self-confident, and doing well in school—in part because they have been recognized by peers, teachers, and the tightly knit local community for their service. Their success may well be due to their own perseverance, but the precision and depth of their reflections about schooling and the local community, and their clear sense of direction, suggests that the 4-H program has made a distinctive contribution to their personal development.

TARGETED CAREER ADVISING AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WHO LACK LEGAL STATUS

Specialized career counseling for the many rural Hispanic students who lack legal status—about 15 percent of all rural Hispanic students—is an important investment in educational outcomes, and a role that middle schools and high schools are especially well-suited to fill.⁵⁵

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Hispanic students who lack legal status, despite having been brought to the United States as children, cannot be excluded from the educational opportunities offered other students. They have grown up as Americans. Many plan to remain in the communities in which they were

raised. But they eventually learn that without legal status, the only segments of the labor market open to them are in low-wage, low-skill occupations where the workforce consists primarily of undocumented immigrants. They learn that many occupational avenues are closed to them because they cannot receive federal financial aid to attend college, or because companies that hire technical, managerial, or professional staff usually comply with immigration law and require proof of citizenship or legal status. Not surprisingly, school success begins to seem irrelevant to their lives.

These lessons are no longer valid because there are now pathways from undocumented status to work authorization for many of the rural Hispanic students in this situation. In fact, the federal government is seeking to spur educational attainment among immigrant youth who have grown up in the United States. The US Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) program of deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) enables applicants who came to the United States before the age of 16, were under the age of 31 on June 15, 2012, and who currently are in school or have completed high school or a GED—or are enrolled in an adult learning or vocational training program—to stay in the country temporarily, without fear of deportation. Once these young adults qualify for DACA, they are able to work legally.

If DACA recipients go on to college, they can then pursue careers that best suit them, including professional careers requiring licensing (e.g., medical school).⁵⁶ This provides powerful motivation for educational success.

Sixteen states have already made the higher education pathway slightly easier for immigrant students without legal status by considering them to be state residents, which allows them to qualify for in-state tuition at both community and four-year colleges.⁵⁷ Another four, California, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington, have enacted legislation to provide state financial aid to undocumented students.

Although Idaho does not consider students lacking legal status to be state residents and does not offer them state financial aid, the Idaho Latino Scholarship Fund is providing financial assistance to students who cannot access federal financial aid. Community-led efforts can make a big difference if they generate private donations to help deserving local students continue their education.⁵⁸

NURTURING PARENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

There is widespread consensus regarding the importance of parents' engagement in their children's educational success, and that this a particular problem for farmworker and other rural Hispanic parents. It is therefore sad and disturbing to observe the paucity of innovative, or even minimally adequate, efforts by rural schools to catalyze Hispanic parent engagement. The longstanding rituals of communication—through report cards, periodic hurried meetings between teachers and parents, half-hearted invitations to volunteer in the classroom (despite the difficulties this presents for working parents), and the stilted processes of school board meetings—have evolved little over the past half-century.

There is no doubt that securing the involvement of farmworker and other rural Hispanic parents is difficult. However, this observation is often used as a convenient excuse for schools' failure of imagination and lack of commitment in engaging Hispanic parents. The search for promising strategies to enhance engagement is bound to be challenging, but schools must make a serious commitment to the effort, allocate appropriate levels of resources to accomplish it, and explore innovative solutions.

How Language and Cultural Barriers Impede School-Parent Communication

Idaho schools have put so little effort into developing effective modalities for parent engagement that there are, in many instances, no school personnel who can serve as effective intermediaries between English-speaking teachers and Spanish-speaking parents. Meeting with a group of farmworker parents I learned that, in addition to language problems, each of them had, at times, found school personnel to be unable or unwilling to meet them halfway. Obstacles included long waits for parent-teacher conferences, disinterest in discussing or modifying school policies, and a lack of practical advice about specific ways for parents to help their children do better in school. The parents went on to say that bilingual instructional aides were, when available, valuable resources for parent-teacher communication.

The consensus among the parents was that they weren't inclined to go to school board meetings because "nobody ever invited us." It is a simple but troubling example of business as usual that schools fail to recognize the inadequacy of an announcement sent home in English, or how an explicit invitation could encourage immigrant parents who feel uncertain of their welcome in society at large.

In districts that receive Migrant Education Program funding, bilingual/bicultural staff are often called upon as intermediaries and seem well equipped to engage in these roles. But they are stretched thin, and cannot regularly make themselves available in every district or every rural school, or to all the families who could benefit from their help. (This last is because only a small minority of Hispanic students are actually eligible for MEP-funded services).

In rural agricultural communities throughout the United States and in Idaho, where there are typically hundreds of Spanish-speaking adults, it is certain that a cadre of interpreters could be recruited (and trained if need be) to become intermediaries in the communication process—if school administrators would just reach out. Many in the Mexican immigrant community would be willing to become engaged in this sort of community endeavor if schools asked for their help, but it is not clear that such invitations have been forthcoming.

Building a Commitment to Collaborative Learning in Rural Hispanic Homes

Rural Hispanic parents have a nominal commitment to their children's education. Their sense of the benefits of education is impaired, however, by their own negative experiences in traditional classrooms, or by their inability to attend school for more than three or four years. Their uncertainty (*"dudas"*) about how to participate in their children's education is made worse when schools' rigid and narrow vision of parental involvement corroborates their underlying worry that the school personnel don't actually want them to be involved.

It will be crucial to move toward finding a fertile common ground, negotiating a space where school personnel and parents can work together effectively to support children's learning—in other words, a mutual adaptation model of immigrant integration. Inevitably, the rural strategy for Hispanic parent engagement will need to focus simultaneously on:

- Building parents' understanding of the importance of **early education progress** (e.g., developing preschoolers' social and cognitive skills and solid reading, math, and science foundation skills in the early grades)—possibly in the context of their familiarity with the successful and popular Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) model
- Building parents' awareness of **middle school** as a period in which students assess their interests and skills, articulate their identity, and begin to consider career trajectories
- Attention to the **high school** years as a phase during which students need to develop the learning skills to succeed in post-secondary education and commit themselves to lifelong learning (not just "going to college" as a generic and poorly articulated societal demand)

An essential element in implementing this strategy will be for the K-12 school system to build awareness among the less-educated Hispanic parents of the challenges their children face in school. One option is to offer them attractive adult learning courses, directly involving them in the process of learning to learn by, in essence, going to school themselves. After all, why shouldn't existing schools be repurposed into bona fide community centers of learning?

Family Literacy and Adult Learning Programs as a Catalyst for Parental Engagement

Family literacy programs have real potential as a means of nurturing parents' engagement in their children's education. School-based and library-based programs that promote parental involvement in reading to their children are clearly useful. Equally clear, however, is that these initiatives work better if the parents are themselves able to read and have access to books, magazines, and other written materials. This is crucial given the educational profile of Mexican immigrants to the rural United States, and the reality that few households have many print materials.

Ideally, school initiatives addressing family literacy should also incorporate attention to digital literacy, because access to a great deal of practical information is now available only online. The same is true of an increasing proportion of social transactions (e.g., bill payment, applications for health insurance on state exchanges).

In rural Hispanic communities throughout the United States and in Idaho with high concentrations of Mexican immigrant parents—especially those with higher numbers of newly arrived families—family literacy programs should focus on the intertwined challenges of building parents' literacy skills and English-language ability. A 2010 review by Robert Crosnoe of the Urban Institute provides a good summary of current perspectives:

Because many immigrants do not have the English capabilities, inside knowledge about schools, or social standing conducive to the involvement expected and rewarded by the American educational system, engaging them more fully in the educational process in the home, school, and community could bring academic returns for their children (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001). For the most part, these efforts have targeted parental involvement through, for example, programs to help immigrant parents construct home literacy environments or to help teachers better communicate with immigrant parents. Yet, attempts to alter the barriers to involvement behavior—through, for example, programs to help parents increase their education or their own English proficiency—have also gained traction (Bridges et al. 2009; St. Pierre et al., 2003).⁵⁹

Family literacy courses need to focus on building the skills that learners use in their daily life. This makes it more likely that learners will actually practice and master their newly acquired skills; it also encourages collaborative learning, where learners have a chance to get help from or provide help to other family members, neighbors, or co-workers.

Family literacy courses need to focus on building the skills that learners use in their daily life. This makes it more likely that learners will actually practice and master their newly acquired skills; it also encourages collaborative learning, where learners have a chance to get help from or provide help to other family members, neighbors, or co-workers.⁶⁰ This sort of family literacy initiative can not only help parents and children learn English

together but also, and perhaps more importantly, foster ongoing conversation within the home about the experiences and dynamics of learning.

Elsa Auerbach's theoretical work and curriculum development, which focused on "making meaning, making change" as a way to solidly engage immigrant adult learners, it is as valuable for rural Hispanic parents as it is for urban immigrants.⁶¹ Gail Weinstein's work extended this focus on practicality and relevance by emphasizing learning activities that engage immigrants in storytelling about their own lives. This is important because it encourages learners to use new, tentatively acquired skills in a way that is bound to be personally significant. At the same time, it reminds educators and their students that literacy consists not simply of reading (passively) but also of active communication: storytelling, writing letters, memos, notes, reminders, framing arguments—the basis for a rich array of personal, individualistic social interactions crucial to success in the workplace, in family life, and in community participation.

• DROPOUT RECOVERY AND ADULT LEARNING PROGRAMS •

In rural agricultural communities where most Hispanic adults are Mexican immigrants with only eight years of schooling on average, and where almost one-third of local Hispanic students drop out of school, adult learning programs and dropout recovery are obviously key elements in any initiative to improve levels of education.⁶²

Rural schools throughout the country and in Idaho have historically treated adult learning programs as a secondary priority. This dismal scenario of neglect is evidenced not just by the limited number of courses offered, or by schools' unwillingness to adjust course offerings to the schedules of working adults; it also is apparent in the dearth of courses designed to help low-literate youth and young adults (who often have limited English proficiency) develop relevant 21st century skills.

Denying rural Hispanic school dropouts a second chance to pursue their education is a lose-lose proposition. It threatens not only their own future but also everyone else's. There are two distinct, high-priority service subpopulations that must be targeted: US-born high school dropouts, and young immigrant adults who dropped out of Mexican elementary or middle schools to migrate to US agricultural employment.

The challenge of providing a platform to launch Hispanic youth and young adults onto a trajectory of lifelong learning is an immediate and relevant one for rural communities. There are a number of strategies that hold out promise and should be part of a comprehensive education strategy in rural Idaho. They all are based on the recognition that overall efforts

to improve prevailing skill levels in the United States require education programs tailored to diverse populations of immigrants, and that curriculum and instructional methodologies must be linked more realistically to workplace-skill demands.⁶³

Innovative Instructional Modalities to Serve Out-of-School Working Youth and Young Adults

An innovative approach is being piloted in Idaho by Another Choice, an online charter school designed specifically to provide options for school dropouts. Development of the model was supported by the Idaho Migrant Education Program as part of its commitment to serving out-of-school migrant youth; subsequent development has been coordinated with the national multi-state Migrant Education consortium (SOSOY—Solutions, Opportunities, and Services for Out-of-School Youth) to which Idaho belongs.⁶⁴ The strategy has great potential because it includes individual student assessment, after which each student is matched with a certified teacher who serves as their learning coach. The school would ideally like to expand its course offerings, which currently include ESL and basic skills development, to include more career-technical courses related to agriculture and other occupations that are in high demand in rural communities.

Idaho's high schools and community colleges are already beginning to collaborate in offering dual-credit courses to make continuing education more feasible—for example, by offering local course sections or distance-learning opportunities. This sort of collaboration could and should be expanded, taking into account the special learning needs of Hispanic school dropouts (e.g., by offering bilingual vocational training).⁶⁵

Although it is challenging to make adult learning a viable option for working youth and young adults who are farmworkers or the children of farmworkers, it is entirely feasible. Bold action will be needed, coupled with systematic evaluation of experimental initiatives. In addition to experimentation with self-directed online learning, these initiatives should include classroom courses that provide tutoring, coaching, and mentoring support to inexperienced learners. Reliance on volunteers as tutors, coaches, and mentors to contribute to this collective community effort can make it possible to build adult learning programs around a core of trained teachers, working with instructional teams in different high-demand areas. In recent years, federal policy has emphasized integration of basic skills development and career-technical education. It is likely that within the framework of the newly-reauthorized Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) more funding will be available for development of innovative programs in this arena.

• SUPPORT FOR DUAL-LANGUAGE LEARNERS (DLLs) •

More than one out of every three Hispanic students in the rural United States and in Idaho are dual-language learners. This population includes not only students who are themselves limited in English proficiency, but also those who may speak English but have few opportunities to speak it at home.

In the case of the English-speaking children in Spanish-speaking homes, their command of English, while apparently adequate, is compressed and narrowed because what little English-language communication there is at home consists mostly of basic exchanges, with hardly any conversation about complex or personally meaningful topics. Although these students speak English, their command of it may not be as robust as that of native-language speakers.

Consequently, the total number of students at a disadvantage in English-language learning is probably greater than would be indicated by standard school reporting of LEPs or ELLs. Idaho Department of Education data indicates there are slightly under 8,000 students, almost all of them Hispanic, who are classified as LEPs in rural Idaho and whose special challenges are recognized; I estimate there are another 7,000 who speak English but live in Spanish-dominant households.⁶⁶

Dual-immersion programs are difficult to implement in urban school districts, where there is wide linguistic diversity among immigrant students. However, in the typical rural school district—where the predominant language other than English is Spanish—dual-immersion programs can be implemented much more easily.

The Promise of Targeted Dual-Immersion Programs

Idaho's dual-language learners are concentrated in a relatively small number of rural school districts. Strengthening support for these students and their families would be quite feasible using a targeted approach. In developing a strategy to serve them effectively, it should be remembered that English-language skills play an important role not only in

language arts, but also in mathematics skills development and, ultimately, across the full range of school subjects. The emphasis in this initiative, in contrast to the middle school and high school initiatives focused on career awareness, should be in K-6.⁶⁷

Dual-immersion programs provide a good vehicle for building language, communication, and social skills for both English-language learners and English-dominant students. These programs are difficult to implement in urban school districts, where there is wide linguistic diversity among immigrant students. However, in the typical rural school district, and particularly in rural agricultural communities—where the predominant language other than English is Spanish—dual-immersion programs can be implemented much more easily.

One important benefit of dual-immersion programs is that they have a positive impact on students' social relations and learning experiences by offering all children opportunities to learn a second language. While high school and college curricula have always treated learning a foreign language as an integral part of a humanistic education, many rural US communities still have not recognized the richness of cultural capital that Mexican immigrants have brought with them. Students' involvement in their peers' learning (both informally and in structured contexts) contributes to the educational experiences of those who teach and/or coach as much as those who receive help.

Laying the Foundation—Recruitment of Bilingual/Bicultural School Staff: The Case of Idaho

Instruction for English-language learners benefits from the availability of bilingual/bicultural teachers. In recent years, there has been growing concern in Idaho regarding the overall lack of Hispanic staff in schools, and specifically bilingual/bicultural staff. For example, the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs has mapped the statewide distribution of the Hispanic population in relation to the number of bilingual teachers in the K-12 education system and found consistent shortages.

The low representation of Hispanic staff among school leadership and the low proportion of Hispanic teachers is problematic. Five out of 376 superintendents, principals, and assistant principals—barely more than one percent—and just 227 out of 17,369 teachers, or 1.3 percent, are Hispanic. Without a pool of Hispanic educators to draw on, it is hard to see how bilingual and bicultural instruction for dual-language learners will be possible. And it is clear that effective responses to the needs of dual-language learners will have to involve some form of bilingual education—although there has been much controversy about the ideal approach to educating dual-language learners.⁶⁸

The Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs has mapped the statewide distribution of the Hispanic population in relation to numbers of bilingual teachers in the K-12 education system and found consistent shortages.

School administrators argue that, because of low salaries, it is difficult to recruit bilingual/bicultural teachers who want to teach in Idaho. But with a large and rapidly growing population of Hispanic young people throughout the United States pursuing teaching careers, it is hard to see why Idaho schools can't recruit newly graduated

bilingual teachers from the adjoining states of Utah, Oregon, or Washington, or, with minimal additional effort, from California or Texas. To be sure, teacher salaries in Idaho are not among the best in the nation. But just as certainly, the labor market for young Hispanic teachers is difficult. Interestingly, many Hispanic professionals who grew up in rural farmworker communities and then migrated to urban areas as part of their career advancement are increasingly interested in returning to rural communities—in part due to the problematic social environment in urban, inner-city neighborhoods.⁶⁹

Idaho has already embarked on efforts to increase the supply of local bilingual/bicultural teachers through programs at Boise State University and the University of Idaho. This is a promising effort; however, it will be important to concurrently undertake efforts to increase schools' willingness to hire these newly trained teachers.

An immediate and eminently feasible short-term strategy is to recruit bilingual/bicultural paraprofessionals (instructional aides, for example), provide them with in-service training to build their skills, and perhaps provide them paths toward becoming certified teachers. For these efforts to be successful, of course, it will be important to seek out bilingual staff who are prepared to become counseling paraprofessionals, thus improving the quality of career counseling for limited-English Hispanic students (some of whom may already have reached middle school or high school age before coming to the United States).

• RECONFIGURING AND REVITALIZING THE FEDERAL-STATE MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM (MEP) •

Compensatory education programs in general, and the MEP specifically, are seen by some observers as a promising policy approach, balancing a focus on a targeted population of disadvantaged learners with the flexibility needed for districts and schools to tailor solutions to the local context. However, for many years, a chronic problem has been that the federal funding stream is seen by local school districts as a routine, supplemental mechanism for financing general school operations. Schools' use of the targeted federal funding has been, at best, diffuse. At the same time, the federal program guidelines have narrowed, while the US Department of Education has intensified its scrutiny of schools' administration of MEP in response to a widely publicized investigative report that found many deficiencies in compliance.⁷⁰

For half a century now, the MEP has been the focal point of federal efforts to improve educational outcomes for the children of farmworkers. At the core of the MEP, funded at a level of \$375 million in fiscal year 2014, are grants to states, which then allocate support to K-12 schools serving migrant students.⁷¹ The Department of Education's narrow definition of migrant farmworker children as the basis for determining service eligibility is problematic; there is abundant evidence that the universe of need actually includes the children of both seasonal and full-time agricultural workers, as well as migrants.⁷² However, the federal emphasis on strict compliance with narrow program guidelines is causing Idaho and other states throughout the rural United States to spend increasing proportions of their federal grants on identification and recruitment of program-eligible students—despite the fact that a dwindling proportion (10 percent of the Hispanic students in rural Idaho school districts) are actually migrants.

The only recourse for Idaho, and for other states with large farmworker populations who genuinely care about the educational well-being of the children of farmworkers, will be:

- a) Advocacy for broadened federal program guidelines that allow service to non-migrant farmworker children, i.e., MSFWs (migrant and seasonal farmworker families), which facilitates both specialized services to children themselves and more robust support for staff to serve as intermediaries between schools and Hispanic parents so as to build parental engagement.
- b) Recognition that the MEP cannot be a siloed program but must rather be integrated into serious mainstream strategies to help rural Hispanic students and school dropouts.
- c) Greater efforts to extend service to out-of-school farmworker youth who desperately need English as a second language (ESL) or adult basic education (ABE) instruction.⁷³

• CONCLUSIONS •

Hispanic students are the largest and fastest-growing ethnic group in rural US schools, but they experience serious disparities in educational outcomes. Any new vision and strategy for improving rural education in Idaho or other areas of the United States must therefore be attentive to their needs. Communities' future well-being—socially, economically, and in the vitality of civic life—rests on integrating these students into the US mainstream by assuring them equal educational opportunity.

The overall strategy to help schools serve each of the rural Hispanic population's distinct student subpopulations effectively must have multiple strands. It must be flexible enough to address a range of individual learning needs; however, it must also build on insights gained from research and input from Hispanic community leaders about the challenges faced by newcomers as well as second- and third-generation Hispanic children.

New strategies to improve rural education for Hispanic students will also need to go beyond a narrow focus on improved instructional methodology if they are to serve students well. Many aspects of the socioeconomic, cultural, and psychological environment outside the classroom play major roles in shaping students' educational experiences, aspirations, and, eventually, educational outcomes. Therefore, the educational leadership in rural communities must, of necessity, step into roles where they are explicitly engaged in community development. School decision-making can then reflect a broad vision of how best to prepare communities for a future where Hispanic students have both upward career mobility and opportunities to become civic leaders.

Rural schools can, quite reasonably, take leadership in transforming what are often relatively narrow community perspectives on the function of schooling. Idaho's rural schools are doing an almost-adequate job of educating Hispanic students, but this is ultimately a recipe for failure. Equal educational opportunity requires students have a chance not to "do OK" but rather to excel.

More bilingual/bicultural staff are desperately needed in rural schools—as resources for building parent engagement, for effective career counseling, and for helping dual-language learners develop a broad spectrum of English-language communication skills. What appears to be lacking in rural schools is an operational commitment to excellence for Hispanic students, including energetic, committed implementation. It would not be difficult, even with modest funding, to start to improve school-family communication, relying primarily on paraprofessionals.

Rural educational leaders must embrace the risks inherent in introducing innovation. More of the same is not a strategy when the status quo gives rise to such dramatic disparities in educational outcomes for Hispanic students.

The strategies we highlight as ways to strengthen middle and high school students' career awareness—more and better career counseling, community service opportunities, more opportunities to interact with Hispanic community leaders and diverse role models—are oriented toward demolishing the counterproductive focus on "back to basics" that

undermines students' social engagement in schooling. Rural educational leaders must embrace the risks inherent in introducing innovation. More of the same is not a strategy when the status quo gives rise to such dramatic disparities in educational outcomes for Hispanic students.

Rural schools cannot claim to be genuinely responsive to communities' needs unless they also reconfigure existing institutional partnerships so as to expand learning opportunities for school dropouts. To be sure, dropout prevention comes first. But it also is crucial, especially within the low-income Hispanic population, to give the teenagers and young adults who left school—whether to work or to have children—a second chance. In truth, many never had a fair *first* chance.

Rural schools will not only need to look beyond the classroom walls, they also need to consider their students' future. Today, more than ever, K-12 education is merely the foundation for post-secondary success. While K-12 schools must better prepare students for the academic realities of college, access to financial aid will be an equally important factor in most rural Hispanic students' decision to stay in school, because the overwhelming majority come from low-income households.

Assuring that rural Hispanic students can secure financial support for college is one way to help keep them in school and enable them to transition successfully into the workforce. Idaho can, at modest cost, enhance the school performance and eventual career outcomes for rural Hispanic students who lack legal status by following other states' lead in passing legislation that recognizes students who graduate from Idaho high schools as state residents, irrespective of their immigration status. It also can provide state financial aid for those who cannot access federal financial aid because of their immigration status. The US Department of Labor also affirms that students who have secured work authorization through the DACA program are eligible for WIOA-funded career-technical-education programs; Idaho high schools need to widely publicize this important avenue toward career pathways that lead to well-paid middle skill occupations.⁷⁴

Although overall Hispanic student school performance lags behind that of white students throughout the rural United States, our analysis of the Idaho data shows that some Idaho school districts, even those with high concentrations of Hispanic students, are doing well in eliminating educational disparities and helping all of their students succeed. An obvious first step will be to initiate applied research efforts to understand how these schools are succeeding—and how best to replicate the promising approaches they've developed.

Some education reform advocates suggest simply that greater funding is needed. Our analysis suggests that increases in funding are indeed necessary to put in place programs that leverage community involvement and mobilize social capital as resources for children's learning. But the funding support required is modest and, with proactive school leadership, can leverage existing resources. These sorts of investments are affordable, even for communities with a low tax base. They are also cost-effective, because a serious focus on community involvement leverages a virtuous cycle of social capital deployment that, in turn, yields valuable inputs to education.

Small rural communities differ from urban areas with more ghettoized immigrant enclaves in that many immigrants and native-born neighbors interact on a day-to-day basis in a wide spectrum of contexts. As a result, it is not hard to see the direction and inevitability of demographic change. There is reason to be optimistic that in these small rural communities, local leaders will step up to the plate to voice support for school activities benefitting all students, but of particular importance to Hispanic students, that can be recognized as contributions to overall economic and civic well-being.

Local and state advocacy for federal regulatory change to bring the Migrant Education Program into the 21st century should be one strand in a campaign to improve outcomes for rural Hispanic students—providing students from settled farmworker families the services which are currently available only to those who are migrants. It will be necessary, however, to avoid the mistake of relying on the federal-state MEP as the primary means. Local schools must take responsibility for providing adequate support for all students from socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged families—particularly in communities that proclaim the virtues of self-sufficiency and independence from burdensome federal regulation.

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• ENDNOTES •

- 1 Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs, “Hispanic Issues in Rural Idaho,” presentation to ROCI, August 22, 2013.
- 2 See “The Status of Rural Education” (last updated May 2013) at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_tla.asp.
- 3 NAEP’s published analyses do not include tabulations specifically of rural Hispanic and White students. Nonetheless, it is possible to compare Idaho with other predominantly rural states. This shows the achievement gap in Idaho to be similar to that of some other predominantly rural states. For example, Idaho has a 19-point Hispanic-white achievement gap in 4th grade mathematics scores—the same as Nevada, slightly better than Oregon and New Mexico (21-point gap), and much better than Utah (27-point gap). Similar patterns appear in reviewing other NAEP indicators of educational performance.
- 4 The most thorough analysis of Hispanic and white students’ NAEP scores examines disparities between average test scores rather than achievement categories (i.e. below basic, basic, proficient, advanced). See National Center for Education Statistics, “How Hispanic Students and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress”, June, 2011. See also U.S. Chamber of Commerce, “Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Effectiveness” at <http://www.leadersandlaggards.org/report-card/idaho>
- 5 National Center for Education Statistics, “The Nation’s Report Card: 2013 State Snapshot Report-Idaho” (Reading, Mathematics, Science)
- 6 The most comprehensive research on this topic can be found in Jensen and Sawyer 2013. I discuss earlier related research that subsequently provides valuable insights about effective strategic interventions.
- 7 The most recent NAWS data (2007–2009) show that nationally about 16 percent of US farmworkers are “follow the crop” migrants. I estimate that less than 10 percent of Idaho farmworkers are migrants, a figure consistent with Idaho’s Migrant Education Program data.
- 8 US Department of Education Data Express. Data are from state reports for FFY 2012. These data suggest that the Idaho Department of Education has done a good job of identifying migrant students, although “identification and requirement” activities have required a substantial portion of its annual MEP budget.
- 9 Kandel 2004, Gozdzik and Martin 2005, Kissam 2007.
- 10 Robert Putnam, whose research on social capital and American life has been widely influential in US social policy, argues persuasively that diversity has great potential for community life, but that there are many challenges inherent in mobilizing it—and that this can be accomplished with strategies to develop “bridging” social capital. See Putnam 2007.
- 11 See Micah Bump, Lindsay Lowell, and Silje Petterson, “The Growth and Population Characteristics of Immigrants and Minorities in America’s New Settlement States” (Appendix 2.3), Gozdzik and Martin 2005. A recent Migration Policy Institute analysis, for example, reports that in the decade from 1990 to 2000, the immigrant population in North Carolina grew by 274 percent and in Utah by 171 percent. The growth of the immigrant population in rural states continues to outpace growth in urban areas with “mature” migration networks. Twenty-two of the 25 states with the fastest immigrant population growth from 2006 to 2012 are rural.
- 12 This discussion is based on Kissam’s research on farmworkers and Mexico-US migration over the past several decades. See Griffith and Kissam 1995; Griffith and Kissam 200; Kissam and Garcia 1992; Kissam 2007. We have also drawn on discussions with Idaho community leaders who grew up in farmworker families during this era (Judge Sergio Gutierrez and Anthony Martinez), as well as rural community educators and activists (Carmen Lucero, Cristina Alvarez, Jesus De Leon, Yolanda De Leon) and a new generation of Hispanic leaders (Leo Morales of the ACLU of Idaho, Irma Moran, Executive Director of the Community Council of Idaho). Other knowledgeable community leaders and activists who provided valuable insights and information include Margie Gutierrez, Executive Director of the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs, and Mary Lou Wells, Idaho State Migrant Education Coordinator.

- 13 A recent article on rural-urban migration based on William Frey's analysis of 2008–2013 census data shows that the rural counties where Mexican immigrant farmworkers have settled (throughout the United States, and in Idaho specifically) are those with no decreases in population. See Shah 2014.
- 14 Briody 1987.
- 15 Ed Kissam analysis of baseline (2002) data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey: 2002-2012. The rural Hispanic student population may now have a slightly higher proportion of U.S.-born students due to lower rates of immigration but Mexico-US immigrants continue to settle and work in rural Idaho communities.
- 16 The best overall source of demographic and socioeconomic data on farmworkers in the United States is the National Agricultural Worker Survey (NAWS), initiated in 1988. The sample only permits regional analyses, but my analysis here is supplemented with data from my 2001–2006 New Pluralism study.
- 17 This is because most but not all Mexican migrants coming to the United States to do farmwork come at an early age, before they have children.
- 18 2007–2009 NAWS data show that almost two-thirds (62 percent) of all farmworkers in the United States speak little or no English; 95 percent of the foreign-born farmworkers fall into this category. See Carroll, Georges, and Saltz 2011.
- 19 Idaho has a slightly lower proportion of foreign-born farmworkers than the national average.
- 20 The proportions of farmworker mixed-status households and of households in which everyone is undocumented varies somewhat from community to community. The New Pluralism case studies of rural agricultural communities, shows that one-third of all households in both Arvin, CA, and Woodburn, OR, were mixed-status or all-undocumented. See Kissam 2007.
- 21 Recent research on measurement of poverty and “alternative” indicators of poverty, which take into account households’ receipt of non-cash services and program benefits, suggests that undocumented families are actually more economically disadvantaged than is evident from analyses of ACS data using standard indicators.
- 22 Gonzalez 2012.
- 23 Kissam and Williams 2013.
- 24 *Idaho State Journal*, “Heinz plant to close: 410 to lose jobs as frozen-food facility shuts down incrementally,” November 16, 2013.
- 25 There is some uncertainty in these estimates because Census Bureau survey methodology suffers from “differential undercount,” resulting results in underrepresentation of immigrants and farmworkers (Fein 1986; Gabbard, Kissam, and Martin 1992; Kissam 2012). Estimates are also affected by differing definitions of “rural.” Particularly problematic are the analyses that treat “rural” areas as consisting only of “non-metro” counties. About one-third of the entire US farmworker population live and work in rural towns within metro areas. (Aguirre International 2007.)
- 26 Adapted from Larson 2006. We have modified the tabulation in Larson’s table, “Children and Youth by Age Groups (Statewide),” p. 22, to include only children and youth 18 or younger.
- 27 My discussion of Hispanic students in rural communities relies on a definition of “rural” used in USDA’s Business and Industry grant program, which differs from the standard OMB definition. (Cromartie 2013.)
- 28 Bach 1995.
- 29 See Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 1995, p. 180.
- 30 See Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova 2009, p. 34. See also Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, and Martin 2009.
- 31 The analysis of outcomes here is based on average composite district scores in language (reading and written expression) and math for subpopulations of students (white, Hispanic, LEP, FRL, and migrants) as reported to the Idaho Department of Education in 2012–2013. The “achievement gap” between LEP and white students is 10 points (more than two standard deviations) in primary school and increases to 14 points (more than four standard deviations) in high school. We are grateful to Joyce Popp of the Idaho Department of Education for her assistance in getting us an Excel file of the underlying data.

- 32 These are cross-sectional analyses, not cohort analyses. The foreign-born students experiencing the most serious personal and academic dislocation are those who arrive in their middle school or high school year. For details, see Van Hook and Fix 2009.
- 33 Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova, pp. 38-39.
- 34 There is now a high-quality body of research on immigrant students' educational experiences—but most of it has focused on urban schooling. (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova 2009; Sawyer and Jennings 2013.)
- 35 In general, because there is a differential dropout rate, with Hispanics less likely to graduate from high school or get a GED than whites, one would expect this winnowing process to bolster the scores of the Hispanic students who do remain in high school. Many methodological issues arise in computing "high school dropout rates."
- 36 The regression models for each of these distinct outcomes varied slightly in statistical significance ($p < .0005$ for the model explaining Hispanic students' average performance in the primary grades; $p < .001$ for the model explaining middle school performance; and $p < .042$ for their high school performance).
- 37 It is important to keep in mind that Department of Education regulations regarding identification of program-eligible migrants are quite stringent, and that most children in Idaho farmworker families cannot be identified as "migrants" because their parents are actually seasonal farmworkers and not migrants. However, as noted previously, the primary correlates of educational disadvantage are not migrancy, but rather growing up in a farmworker or immigrant family.
- 38 The models relating migrant student outcomes to district size seem to explain a substantial amount of variance in student performance (70 percent in the primary grades and 88 percent in the high school grades).
- 39 Statistical analysis of educational outcomes for LEP students is further hampered by the fact that the most adept, rapid English-language learners are those who are soonest reclassified as mainstream students. Several education policy analysts are now calling for schools to report not simply how many students are English-language learners (an alternative term for LEP), but how long they have been classified in this category. See the Working Group on ELL Policy 2010.
- 40 The only significant variable in the model for overall district performance was percentage of Hispanic enrollment. (Adj. $R^2 = .27$, $F = 24.369$ and $P < .0005$)
- 41 Three variables were statistically significant in relation to overall primary grade academic performance: percentage of Hispanics, district size (with larger districts doing better), and percentage of limited-English students. (Adj. $R^2 = .51$, $F = 22.825$, $P < .0005$)
- 42 In the middle school grades, proportions of free/reduced lunch-eligible students and Hispanic students both had a significant inverse relationship to overall district academic performance. Proportion of free/reduced lunch students appears to be a bigger factor ($Beta = -.467$) than proportion of Hispanics ($Beta = -.295$).
- 43 Samuel R. Sperry and Paul T. Hill, "The Politics of K-12 Education in Small Rural School Districts: The Case of Idaho," (2015) http://www.rociidaho.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ROCI_2014_K-12Politics_FINAL.pdf
- 44 A good discussion can be found in Brandt 1992.
- 45 Levin has begun to emphasize this aspect of school improvement as well (see Levin 2006). Levin's characterization of "world-class education" is well harmonized with other modes of visualizing educational excellence in the 21st century—e.g., the curriculum framework developed by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, ongoing trends toward more "authentic" modalities for assessing education performance, and analyses oriented toward economic productivity/workforce skills development, such as articulated by Murnane and Levy in the SCANS and the Equipped for the Future (EFF) framework.
- 46 In the 2012–2013 school year, Idaho began its transition from the NCLB framework for school accountability into a newly designed "five star" rating system, which will include a postsecondary and college readiness matrix.
- 47 This conclusion is based on a 2008 strategic review Kissam conducted for ETA/DOL of NFJP youth programs funded under WIA Section 167 in North Carolina, Texas, Florida, Washington, and California (see Aguirre International 2008). This also reflects discussions with Hispanic leaders in rural communities and the Idaho WIA 167 grantee, the Community Council of Idaho.

- 48 Holzer and Lerman 2009.
- 49 In April 2014, the Department of Education announced a new program providing more than \$100 million to better integrate high school curriculum and work experience. (New York Times, April 8, 2014.)
- 50 Robert Putnam has become a widely recognized proponent of social capital as a means for leveraging positive change. However, researcher Alejandro Portes points out that there is both a “bright” and a “dark” side to social capital. Putnam and other researchers agree and distinguish between “virtuous cycles” and “vicious cycles.” The trick to leveraging change is to catalyze virtuous cycles of social capital accumulation and deployment.
- 51 See <http://www.astrojh.com> for more information on the Reaching for the Stars foundation. Themes in Hernandez’s personal narrative that are particularly relevant to rural Hispanic students, who see him as a role model, include the importance of persistence (his application to NASA’s astronaut program was rejected seven times, and each time his response was to embark on developing the skills he lacked) and the possibility of building multiple interests and skill sets into a career (he is also an electrical engineer now working at Lawrence Livermore Laboratories, where he has participated in developing enhanced technology for breast cancer screening and serves as part of the US nuclear arms control team).
- 52 Over the past two decades, the Corporation for National and Community Service has built on earlier experience with VISTA programs and sparked widespread incorporation of service-learning activities into both the K-12 school system and higher education.
- 53 According to the Latinos in Action website (<http://www.latinosinaction.org>), the program is currently being implemented only in the Jerome School District, but the Idaho Latino Educational Foundation is pushing to expand it in Idaho.
- 54 The model was developed by University of Idaho extension specialist Liliana Vega, who is implementing it at the Farmworker Village Labor Camp near Caldwell, ID.
- 55 This estimate is approximate, based on Ed Kissam’s analysis of National Educational Longitudinal Survey data from 2002, analysis of National Agricultural Worker Survey data prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor by Susan Gabbard of Aguirre International, and the Center for Migration Studies newly-released ACS-based database with state-by-state tabulations and profiles of the undocumented population.
- 56 Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC) is sponsoring a network of DREAMers—students without legal status—who are pursuing health careers. The group was informed by the California Medical Licensing board that it did not consider their status as lawful (nonpermanent) residents to be a barrier to licensing as an MD, and that DACA recipients would also be eligible since they have been provided work authorization documents by USCIS. A growing number of high schools and universities across the United States are developing strategies to actively support DREAMers and DACA recipients.
- 57 See National Council of State Legislatures website: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/undocumented-student-tuition-state-action.aspx>.
- 58 Recently a major foundation, in collaboration with Educators for Fair Consideration, initiated a program that provides matching funds for local organizations offering scholarships to students who cannot receive federal financial aid.
- 59 Robert Crosnoe, “Two-Generation Strategies and Involving Immigrant Parents in Children’s Education,” The Urban Institute, 2010.
- 60 Literacy expert Steve Reder has written provocatively about the “natural” processes of collaborative literacy that give ad hoc “learning circles” their power as a mode of adult learning. See Reder 1994.
- 61 Auerbach 1989.
- 62 A report, *Diplomas Count 2012 by Education Week* and Joint Projects in Education, shows a graduation rate of only 69.2 percent of Hispanic students in Idaho. However, a multitude of methodological issues are involved in defining and accurately measuring school dropout, though we believe that the CPI (Cumulative Promotion Index) used in this report is the best. For details see <http://www.edweek.org/rc>.

- 63 Recommendations 1, 3, 4, and 5 of a recent discussion paper from the US Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. See US Department of Education 2013. See also the recommendations in its recently-issued national plan for adult learning, “Making Skills Everyone’s Business: A Call to Transform Adult Learning in the United States”, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, February, 2015.
- 64 This discussion is based on review of course-related materials and an interview with Dr. Kelsey Williams, who developed the model as part of her doctoral dissertation and who is now the school administrator.
- 65 One of the leading national employment training organizations, the Center for Employment Training, has been offering bilingual vocational training for more than 40 years. The approach is impressive.
- 66 The Idaho Department of Education website has posted an excellent short overview, “Application of Common Core State Standards for English Language Learners,” which highlights a range of promising strategies. The challenge remains that of reconfiguring classroom instruction and school climate so as to implement these strategies.
- 67 Crosnoe 2006.
- 68 In 1991 the US Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit Court overturned an argument by the Idaho Department of Education that it didn’t have the authority to exercise supervisory powers over local school districts to assure they provided equal educational opportunity to LEP students. The court’s decision affirmed the state agency’s authority to supervise the local districts. (Idaho Migrant Council et al. v. Board of Education.)
- 69 Ed Kissam field notes (2003–2006), “New Pluralism” Arvin case study. Details on findings regarding immigrant and non-immigrant perceptions about the social and civic environment can be found at <http://www.wkfamilyfund.org/index.html>.
- 70 Zehr 2007.
- 71 The program also includes the HEP and CAMP programs, which support a limited number of regional programs designed to help migrant students transition from K-12 school on into college. They are funded at slightly under \$20 million each.
- 72 It is arguable that the US Department of Education has simply complied with statutory provisions. However, there is ample evidence showing that federal agencies have exercised a good deal of discretion in interpreting the term “migrant” as it appears in statutory language. A good example is an internal Legal Services Corporation memorandum known as “the McKay letter” (2000) interpreting the definition for the purpose of setting guidelines for service eligibility. The definitive analysis is to be found in Martin 1988.
- 73 The statutory framework was expanded in 1988 to allow Migrant Education Programs to serve “out-of-school youth”—farmworker youth who are dependents of farmworkers, or themselves farmworkers age 21 or younger. There have been varying levels of interest in these efforts in different states, but they fall well short of what could be done, probably due to state and local reluctance to use MEP funding for anything other than in-school K-12 classroom efforts. Sparked by a White House report on Hispanic youth, there were extensive discussions during 2001–2002 by a federal interagency working group to come up with multi-service program models for out-of-school farmworker youth, but the initiative was never implemented.
- 74 See, Rachel Unruh and Amanda Bergson-Shilcock “Missing in Action: Job-Driven Educational Pathways for Unauthorized Youth and Adults”, National Skills Coalition, February, 2015.

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