

**ISSUE
BRIEF**

LATINOS & EDUCATION IN MARIN

WRITTEN BY

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**IN
COLLABORATION:**





Marin County ranks **#1**
in disparities among all
58 counties in California.

We **CAN** change this.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This Issue Brief seeks to stimulate discussion and concerted action to elevate academic achievement among Latino students. There is urgency to steadfastly pursue equity and to dismantle disparities in the County.

This document identifies three fundamental and intersecting issues that have been colliding and halting success for Latinos in Marin County:

1. Low academic achievement;
2. Increased poverty; and
3. Population growth in the Latino community.

Furthermore, this Issue Brief argues that by embracing Latinos as a County-wide asset, new forms of service may surface and flourish, new approaches may be devised, and new goals may be pursued. These new frameworks can provide lasting and unobstructed pathways to academic achievement for Latino students. In turn, academic achievement is a well-documented vehicle towards economic success and security for students and families, as well as better health, overall wellbeing, and civic engagement, among other positive byproducts.

Additionally, academic achievement brings about economic vitality to the communities where people live and work. In essence, a growing and successful Latino population is good for everyone, economically and socially, because it serves to: Strengthen the labor force, create jobs, increase the community's purchasing power, and build new pathways to innovation and diverse leadership.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONT.

Academic achievement

In Marin County there is persistently low academic achievement among Latino students in third-grade reading skills, math, and college readiness, vis à vis White and Asian students. These are achievement disparities that signal a critical need to envision and implement new practices and policies that solidly foment academic success. The literature provides ample data and recommendations on what works and what doesn't. Marin County can gain from this insight –for example, English immersion falters over time, and bilingualism enables non-English speakers to thrive:

“While students in English immersion programs perform better in the short-term, over the long-run, students in classrooms taught in two languages not only catch up to their English immersion counterparts, but they eventually surpass them, both academically and linguistically.”

Stanford Report (March 25, 2014). Students learning English benefit more in two-language instructional programs than English immersion

Increased poverty and population growth

The current trend should alarm all: As the Latino population grows in Marin, their poverty levels increase. This situation puts additional stress on a population that is already marginalized, creating additional barriers to academic achievement.

For Latinos in Marin County, low educational achievement and increases in poverty and population collide, as the Latino population grows.

BY THE NUMBERS

Latinos are surpassing Whites in annual population growth rates.

The 2010 Census shows that 15.5 percent of the population in Marin County was Latino.

Poverty rates among Latinos grew as the population increased.

Latinos are poorer now than they were in 2010. While in 2010, 4.8 percent of Latinos lived at less than 50 percent of the poverty level, by 2016 that number had increased to 7.4 percent. Similar increases in percentage points are observed for Latinos living at less than 100 and 125 percent of the poverty level during the same period of time. Notably, poverty rates for Whites, Asians, and Blacks remained fairly stable, with minimum increases at most.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONT.

Working towards change

Efforts underway are producing some practices that support students in new ways. For example, Marin Promise, a collaborative of non-profits, schools, funders, and other entities, monitors academic achievement among all racial and ethnic groups. This collaborative has measurable goals to improve academic achievement and eliminate the educational gap by 2028. Partnering organizations carry out their respective work with these joint goals in mind. Collaborative action teams, a partnership council, and an executive committee engage in activities ranging from reviewing local and national educational data, and developing plans of action, to promoting joint action, and representing a range of voices in the county.

To truly foster academic achievement among Latino students, some fundamental changes need to occur. For example, high-school curricula should align with A-G requirements, which are necessary for enrollment in California's public universities. Surprisingly, this alignment is missing in Marin. Even if a student is not going to pursue higher education, A-G classes help prepare high school students for employment.

Further, the ratio of counselor-to-student in Marin is insufficient to ensure that all students receive the guidance they need to develop and achieve their educational goals. Counseling is an important element in the educational toolkit to support student preparedness to apply for college, as well as to bolster their overall educational performance, and emotional wellbeing.

Population increases, and the rise of poverty rates among Latinos is a matter of serious concern. The County will be able to better support Latino student achievement by engaging in a comprehensive and sustained effort to understand and address the intersections and dimensions of race, place (such as neighborhoods where large number of residents are low-income) and poverty. This Issue Brief emphasizes and recommends this as a path to addressing, reducing, and ultimately eliminating the overarching and enduring issues and inequities that fundamentally curtail opportunities of success for significant numbers of Latinos in Marin County.

CONCERNS

In Marin County, high rates of low academic achievement and increasing poverty among Latinos is perhaps the most glaring reflection of profound racial disparities and inequities. In fact, according to a study by Race Counts, Marin County ranks first among all 58 California counties when it comes to racial disparities. Ironically, it also ranks first in economic and other financial and performance measures reflect the benefits and advantages afforded to the White population.

Population trends depict a sustained change in the racial and ethnic composition of the County, whereby aging Whites and a growing and young Latino population meet at a critical demographic juncture, conceivably best described as a historical turning point. Thus, profound racial inequities should concern everyone.

The Educational Landscape: A Brief National Overview

Trends in the nation point to a future where Latinos will represent a third of the population. Meanwhile, the educational landscape remains bumpy, if not perilous, for Latinos, mostly for those in low to moderate-income households. Advancements made in high school graduation rates among Latinos are historically significant. However, college degree attainment remains elusive for most, while the value of a high-school diploma continues to decline, as jobs require higher levels of education.

Inasmuch as a high school degree makes a significant difference in someone's life, a college degree delivers a profound mark in a person's life trajectory. There is pronounced contrast not only in income differentials, but also in attitudes towards work and career expectations. A recent Pew Research Center study of millennials showed that those with a college degree participating in the workforce view their jobs as a career, or as a career ladder —they see themselves as having a future. However, those without a college degree see their work as "just a job to get by." Further, the U.S. has seen an ongoing decline in the value of a high school degree. In 1956, high-school graduate income was \$31,384. Surprisingly, by 2013, high-school income had fallen to \$28,000. Conversely, income for college graduates has sustained increases over time.

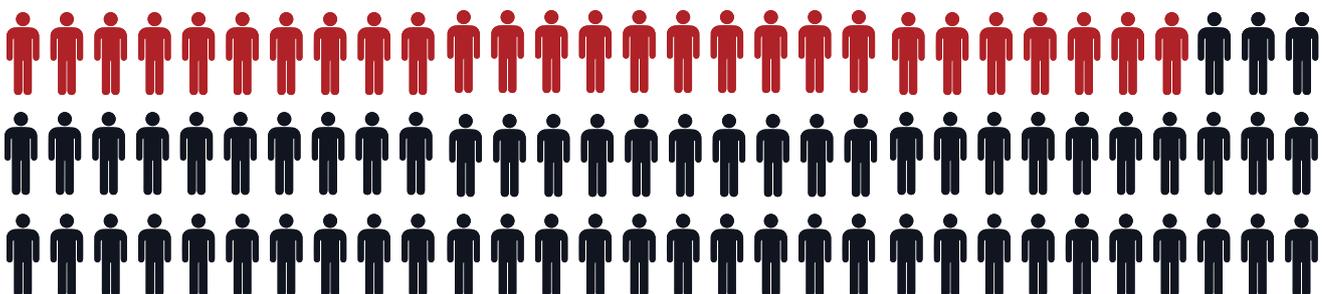
Nationally, Latinos have been graduating from high school in higher numbers than in past years: in 1995, 35 percent of Latinos dropped out of high school. By 2015, the rate had declined by 23 percentage points, down to 12 percent.

CONCERNS CONT.

Notably, Latino enrollment in college also shows increases over time. By 2014, 35 percent of Latinos ages 18 to 24 had enrolled in two and four-year colleges, while in the mid-1990s barely over 20 percent did so. Unfortunately, graduation from college is not showing the same growing trends. In fact, figures for a couple of years back show that only 15 percent of Latinos ages 25-29 had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 41 percent of Whites, 22 percent of Blacks, and 63 percent of Asians.

While lagging behind in college graduation rates, the Latino population has been growing in the U.S. as a whole. This begs the question: Will Latinos reach the level of academic achievement needed to be leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs? To be the scientists, doctors, astronauts, business innovators, elected officials, executives, members of boards, school teachers and professors, administrators, and all other roles needed to inject vitality into the country? Will the country's commitment to 30 percent of its population remain elusive in the ensuing years between now and 2050, or will it be fully embraced? The Country's future will depend, in part, on the Latino community's advancement or stagnation.

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO
REMEMBER THAT BY 2050
LATINOS WILL REPRESENT
30% OF THE
U.S. POPULATION**



LATINOS AND THE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE: MARIN COUNTY

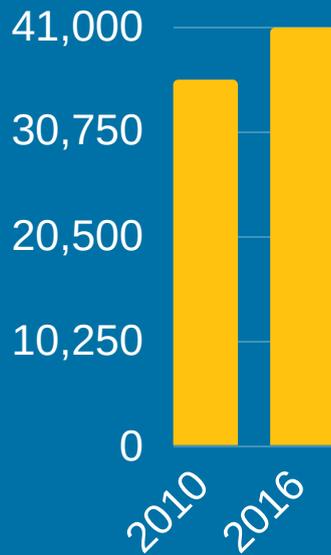
14.2%

Latino Population Growth Rate in San Rafael (2010-16)

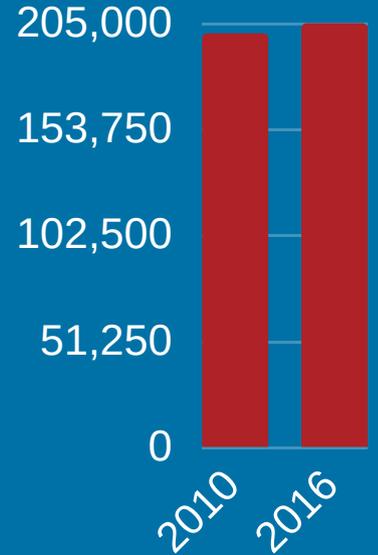
2.4%

White Population Growth Rate in San Rafael (2010-16)

Marin, recognized nationally for its affluence, is often equated to a rather homogenous White County. While not entirely true, the preponderance of the population has been, and still is White and affluent. The scales are shifting, however. The growth of the Latino population has surpassed that of Whites, and here are the numbers to demonstrate this shift:

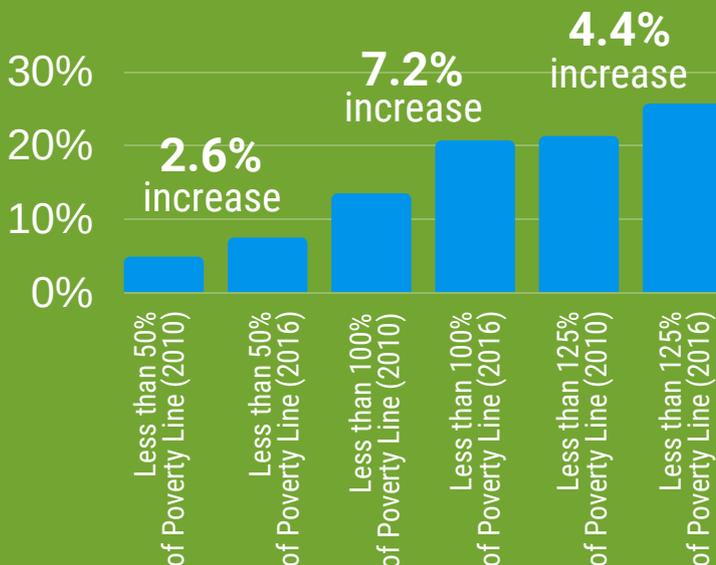


Latino Population San Rafael



White Population San Rafael

Latino Poverty Rate



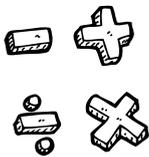
As shown above, between 2010-2016, the County's population visibly shifted in its racial and ethnic composition. Namely, the Latino population grew at a significantly faster rate than Whites. During this same period of time, poverty among Latinos increased. Projections for the future appear to suggest similar trends on both fronts.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: LATINOS IN MARIN COUNTY

Academic achievement gaps abound for Latinos. As shown by the Marin Promise quantitative data, these gaps are in reading proficiency by third grade, mastering math skills by 9th grade, and college and career readiness after high-school, among other measures. Further, these concerning gaps have been nearly stagnant over the last three years. More specifically:



In 2017 and in the previous two years, **28 to 31 percent of Latino students achieved reading proficiency by third grade**, compared to over **70 percent of Whites and Asians**.



Rates in mastering math skills ranged between **24 to 26 percent for Latinos** in 2015, 2016 and 2017, while **Whites and Asians surpassed 70 percent**.



College and career readiness speaks dismally about outcomes for Marin's Latino students: in 2015 and 2016, **Latino college readiness rates were nearly 35 percent**, while rates for **Whites and Asians surpassed 70 percent**.



In Marin, there are **5.6 non-White teachers per 100 non-White students**. This is an imbalance in representation of significant proportions

With regard to college readiness and admissions, many students do not know that they may not be eligible for acceptance in public universities in California because they may be lacking specific requirements, namely earning a C or better in A-G classes. An example from San Rafael shows how matters may be even more tenuous due to insufficient academic support: The 2017 counselor-to-student ratio at San Rafael High School is 433:1, let the ratio speak for itself, -while the recommended ratio is 250:1, according to the American School Counselor Association.

Win or lose? It is not only the Latino community that stands to win or lose, it is the County as a whole. The County faces a true predicament. Marin County should quadruple its efforts to vacate the number one ranking in disparities in all of California and fill that space with winning strategies to advance those impacted by disparities, promoting enduring equity among all of its inhabitants.

EFFORTS AND POLICIES IN MARIN COUNTY CURRENTLY UNDERWAY

A range of non-profit organizations have been providing support to low-income populations, including Latinos, in Marin County for years. Their efforts and dedication don't go unnoticed and have helped many individuals and families over time. These organizations offer after-school and other educational services, workforce development, and a range of programs to support people in need. Given current disparities for Latinos (and other low-income groups), these services continue to be important, while deeper collaborations and new creative solutions between non-profits and schools may prove to be fruitful in the academic achievement sphere, and beyond.

In addition, new joint efforts are sprouting across the County. Perhaps most illustrative of recently-forged collaborations is Marin Promise Partnership. This is an initiative that engages a wide range of organizations in the County, including school districts, community members, nonprofit staff, government officials, CEOs, and funders. Working collaboratively, these organizations and leaders are striving to find solutions to close the County's persistent academic achievement gap. Through collaborative action teams, a partnership council, and the executive committee, Marin Promise Partnership values equity and pursues alignment among organizations. Further, Marin Promise Partnership measures academic performance among students in the County, across race, ethnicity and economic level, by school and district. Marin Promise Partnership has an ambitious goal: To close the opportunity gap by 2028 and bring about educational equity. This tall order and expected outcomes markedly contrast with reality today. The degree to which all partner organizations can indeed align their work and overall goals will greatly influence the success of the endeavor. In an interview for this project, Ann Mathieson, Executive Director of Marin Promise, remarked on the idea that all players must agree on a common outcome regarding Latino education.

Marin County schools do not have graduation requirements that are aligned to A-G requirements, regardless of the fact that these classes are fundamental and foundational for college and university applications and acceptance. Because there are eighteen separate school districts with their respective Boards in the County, it is complicated to arrive at the same goals and standards of education, although this should be a common ground imperative. Ms. Mathieson remarked on the importance of ensuring that all high-school students have a college plan early on so that they know what courses they have to take to be college-ready. Marin Promise has developed a sample college plan that is being circulated and shared. The limited number of counselors per student in schools with high numbers of low-income Latino students represents a lingering limitation to the ability to support everyone in the development of their college plan.

EFFORTS AND POLICIES IN MARIN COUNTY CURRENTLY UNDERWAY

CONT.

College of Marin (a community college), is involved in the Marin Promise Partnership. In conversation with President Coon, we learned that the College has implemented a number of educational and humanistic initiatives to create ease of access for low-income students, among them, Latinos. These initiatives include offering free ESL classes and providing these for credit, whereas before they did not result in credits. College of Marin has thirty Puente students. The College also works with high school students in the 9th and 10th grades to support their college readiness, which is a very important activity to introduce students to college life. The College recognizes a need to recruit more faculty of color, and because Marin County's housing is unaffordable for many, the College's Indian Valley Campus is assessing whether faculty housing could be built in the premises. Lastly, as the Latino population continues to grow in Marin County, it is reasonable to project an expanding Latino student body in local schools, the college and university, because this is a young population overall.

During an interview for this project with Mary Jane Burke, Marin County's Superintendent of Schools, she highlighted the value of parent engagement to advance academic achievement among Latinos. Ms. Burke further remarked that creating a culture of high expectations in Marin's schools is a critical tool to build student confidence and stimulate achievement. According to Ms. Burke, it is through in-depth multicultural understanding that the needs of Latino students can best be addressed, and their talents cultivated and manifested.

Early childhood education is key in Ms. Burke's opinion. Low third-grade reading proficiency among Marin's Latino students signals missed opportunities in these children's younger years. Specifically, and as shown elsewhere in this Issue Brief, in 2017 and in the previous two years, 28 to 31 percent of Latino students achieved reading proficiency by third grade, compared to over 70 percent of Whites and Asians. To underperform so drastically by third grade, it is clear that Latino children either did not attend early childhood education programs, or if they did, the academic gains were minimal at best, and/or these children lacked opportunity and stimulus to prosper academically. In fact, only about a third of Latino children enroll and participate in early childhood education programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations advanced in this Issue Brief are intended to be foundational and to elicit discussion, further understanding, new perspectives, and concerted action. Despite years of dedication by many, Latino students underperform in all critical academic achievement measures. How can this be and how can this be changed? Sadly, Latino students in Marin County have been surrounded by elusive opportunities, and their futures have been undercut due to academic underachievement. We can change this. We must change this. Below, are key recommendations.

Intersections: The County's schools and service agencies can and should further address and build multi-organizational goals to jointly tackle intersections between poverty and academic achievement and find solutions to the perpetuation of poverty. Data show that there is a concerning trend as the Latino population grows, and as their poverty rates similarly grow—it is imperative to continue to examine the root causes of this situation and advance dialogue about actions to turn this tide around. In essence, it is essential to remember that the Latino population is growing, and poverty issues will continue to need attention. Organizations need to address this critical need in concert with others, taking intersections into account.

To cement a vision and goals for Latino academic achievement, there can be a document, agreement, memorandum of understanding, or another formal piece that presents the intersecting factors influencing academic performance. This document would stipulate goals that aim to improve these conditions—as a whole, for Marin's Latinos, with a vision towards 2028—much like Marin Promise, but intersectional in intention and in nature, and centering on Latinos.

Early childhood education: The County needs to deeply examine the vehicles, venues, access and impediments to access to early childhood education programs for Latinos. Key questions: Is the fact that only a third of Latino children are enrolled in these programs due to poverty issues? Language issues? Transportation issues? Lack of awareness about benefits about this phase of education in the life of a child? Lack of program availability? Are there intersecting issues? Who is doing what about this? How can efforts be enhanced?

RECOMMENDATIONS

CONT.

College readiness: Within the PK-12 school setting in Marin, there are key factors and policies -or lack of policies- impacting Latino students. Marin school districts' high school graduation requirements do not align with A-G requirements for college admissions, negatively impacting student readiness and curtailing opportunities. There is also a concrete need to ensure each student has a four-year plan, which is not the case now. Policies and practices need to highlight and relentlessly pursue and support equity.

Counselor services: There is a proven need to expand the number of counselors in San Rafael and other high schools, per the American Association of School Counselors recommendations mentioned above. Moreover, there should be a review of counselors' policies in all high schools in the County, (if they exist) and ensure A-G requirements are covered with all students. Where those policies do not exist, they should be developed and ratified by the appropriate administrative officers.

Diversity: In Marin there are about six non-White teachers per 100 non-White students. Multicultural competencies at school are a must. It is important to use a new lens and focus attention on an asset-based approach that can create lasting change and rich multicultural appreciation, while also working on diversifying schools at the teacher and administrative levels.

Language: Bilingualism should be emphasized, as it has been shown to produce positive and lasting academic outcomes. In English immersion programs, the benefits of being bilingual can be lost. Further, the advantages that a foreign language offers may become a disadvantage, and when this transpires, it represents an absurd circumstance. As described in the Executive Summary, bilingual education has been found to produce deeper accomplishments and greater academic success than immersion programs. As a whole, it is easy to argue that knowing two languages is better than knowing one; knowing two languages is advantageous.

Place matters: The improvement of setting and communities in which students live is critical. It is important to work on the reduction of poverty and income disparities for individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities as a whole. Root causes need attention. Low-income neighborhoods need revitalization.



LEVERAGING POSSIBILITIES

A spearheading partner: In an interview with Ms. Kate Colin, San Rafael City Council Member, she referred to the importance of adequate housing and economic development as key levers to lift a community out of poverty and thus create stronger pathways for the academic success of children and youth. Ms. Colin currently spearheads efforts to augment Latino representation in elected seats in the County. She understands the opportunities the County has, both in terms of labor force growth, and potential, as well as in leadership stemming from the Latino community. She also understands that housing costs and other factors halt the advancement of Latinos in the County, and concomitantly exacerbate poverty. On her part, as an elected official, Ms. Colin can help advance ideas for cross-sector efforts to eliminate barriers to Latino success, focusing on San Rafael. She can provide insight on effective housing initiatives (currently led or envisioned), as well as in economic development and Latino leadership advancement. It is the hope that other elected officials will undertake efforts similar to those of Ms. Colin across the County and embrace the Latino population further.

TO CONCLUDE

A Proclamation: There is an opportunity, if not an imperative, for a County-wide directive or proclamation and a concomitant commitment to embrace Latinos as a County asset. Along with this, there is a need for greater awareness-building among decision makers, which legislators in the County can support with this proclamation and through sustained and focused attention and action.

CALL TO ACTION

Latino Futures and Canal Alliance are putting forth a loud call to action directed at Marin County leaders and decision makers.

This call is to deeply examine root causes of poverty and academic underperformance among Latinos.

To see Latinos as an asset, and to act now by strengthening collaborations and creating additional methods and practices to effectively turn the tide.

This call is to imagine the County's future, supported by a successful and thriving Latino population.

This call is to imagine a future of innovation and equity.

A future of widespread prosperity.

This future requires immediate action now.

SOURCES

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Interviews for this Issue Brief:

Dr. Coon, President of College of Marin

Ms. Mary Jane Burke, Marin County's Superintendent of Schools

Ms. Ann Mathieson, Executive Director, Marin Promise Partnership

Ms. Kate Colin, San Rafael City Council Member