

A Solution-Finding Report

Title: Districts and Rapidly Changing Demographics

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This document responds to a request from Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory seeking information for a client requesting the name of “a district (or districts) that have experienced rapid changing demographic profiles. The issues are all of the predictable ones: shifts in numbers of students qualifying for ESL services, rapidly increasing numbers of families qualifying for free/reduced meals, racial and ethnic minority enrollments increasing rapidly, etc. In addition to a request for the names of districts, the client also asked about any research on what districts have done that is making a difference.”

Introduction

Rapidly changing and expanding schools and districts can be found in many states, and the examples that follow were discovered in a cursory search of the Internet. While much of the recent demographic change can be attributed to a widespread influx of Spanish-speaking students, other non-English language groups, such as Portuguese (Fall River and New Bedford, MA) and Hmong (Minneapolis), may be responsible for highly localized but nevertheless dramatic demographic changes. The Tucson (AZ) area has a number of districts which have experienced rapid growth: Tucson Unified School District, Sahuarita Unified School District, and Marana Unified School District. Near Houston (TX), the Katy Independent School district has also experienced rapid expansion. In the Northeast, Raritan Township (NJ) has seen significant changes in its student population. In California, one first grade class in the West Contra Costa Unified School District includes students that speak Farsi, Mandarin, Portuguese, Pilipino, Spanish, and Tamil. Additional locations can be gleaned from the documents listed below.

Studies and Reports

Bohon, S. A., MacPherson, H., & Atilas, J. H. (2005). Educational barriers for new Latinos in Georgia. *Journal of Latinos & Education*, 4(1), 43–58.

The recent influx of Latinos to new destinations in the Southeast offers a unique opportunity to explore educational outcomes in emerging gateway states. This study utilizes qualitative methods to predict future educational outcomes for Latinos in Georgia. Six primary barriers to Latino educational attainment were uncovered: (a) lack of understanding of the U.S. school system, (b) low parental involvement in the schools, (c) lack of residential stability among the Latino population, (d) little school support for the needs of Latino students, (e) few incentives for the continuation of Latino education, and (f) barred immigrant access to higher education.

Brunn, M. (2002, October). The social organization of diversity: The changing faces in rural America. Annual meeting of the Northern Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association.

ERIC No.: ED469367

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1a/74/b5.pdf

“Changes in the social organization and context of education were studied in a rural Illinois school district experiencing a rapid **influx** of Hispanic students. . . .and the number of Hispanic students in the **schools** went from a few to over 180 (out of 1,100 total students). In addition, there was considerable student mobility, as families migrated in and out of the area. The school personnel were unprepared for this sudden change, and many pedagogical and classroom changes were made on an emergency basis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 33 teachers (41 percent of the preK-12 staff) and 3 administrators. All but one had lived their whole lives in the area. The interviews investigated educators' beliefs and attitudes that would function to separate or integrate student ethnic groups, and identified practices that promoted social inclusion. Themes included initial resistance to bilingual education and other changes necessitated by the new students, who were often viewed as "temporary"; initial animosity toward and gradual acceptance of new bilingual staff; some teachers' efforts to influence student attitudes; easier social integration in the elementary grades; conflict resolution between groups of secondary students; special programs for migrant students and their parents; inservice teacher education on intercultural communication and establishing communities of learners; and purposeful attention to the dynamics of social justice.”

Caldas, S. J., Bankston, C. L., III, & Cain, J. S. (2007). A case study of teachers' perceptions of school desegregation and the redistribution of social and academic capital. *Education and Urban Society*, 39(2), 194–222.

This case study gauges the perceptions of teachers to the "harm and benefit thesis" of Coleman's social-capital hypothesis. The study uses data from one de facto segregated southern school system that hastily implemented a court order in 2000. The study collects the perceptions of teachers at five predominantly middle-class White schools that received 460 lower socioeconomic status African American students ordered bussed when their inner-city schools were closed. Sixty-percent of the teachers feel that the African American students are better off in the White schools. However, only 11% feel that the White students are better off than before the busing. Open-ended responses reveal that most teacher comments are negative, with fully 40% of teachers specifically indicating that busing had increased discipline problems. The study findings undermine the notion that transferring Black students to majority White schools is necessarily a superior pedagogical strategy.

Capps, R., Fix, M., Murray, J., Ost, J., Passel, J. S., & Herwanto, S. [2005?]. *The new demography of America's schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind Act*.

http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311230_new_demography.pdf

“The report [using data from the 2000 census] begins by describing children of immigrants and limited English proficient children. Next, it discusses children of immigrants in low-income families—another protected group under NCLB. After that, the report examines how family income and parental education interact with linguistic proficiency and isolation. Finally, the report describes characteristics of children of immigrants who fall within the major racial and ethnic reporting groups mandated under NCLB—Latino, Asian, and black students—and draws comparisons among children with parents from different countries.”

Contreras, A. R. (2002). The impact of immigration policy on education reform. *Education and Urban Society*, 34(2), 134–155.

“This article presents an analysis of how current immigration policy affects educators and their efforts to educate in schools serving immigrant families. The focus was on those factors that play a critical role in meeting the needs of immigrant students including access to schools and school programs; assessment and placement; differentiated curricula; school climate; availability of support services and community involvement. The analysis suggests that immigration policy affects education by its facilitation of a massive increase in school enrollment of immigrant students whose presence is a major stimulus for school restructuring and curricular reform. Furthermore, their level of education will strongly affect the quality of the future labor force and the demand for public services. This indicates that educational leaders must focus on reform efforts that realize, at the minimum, high school graduation and college attendance. Moreover, the public must advocate reforms that encourage naturalization and expedite English proficiency for adult immigrants already living and working in all regions of the nation.

David, Cecile. (2005, August). Schools, communities and demographic change: Organizational responses to population growth and changes in racial composition. Annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Philadelphia, PA.

<http://www.allacademic.com> [\$]

“This research project examines how schools respond to demographic changes, particularly to changes in the racial composition of their student body. It concentrates on three areas relating to a school’s ability to undergo institutional or organizational change: responsiveness, capacity and agency. It considers the process of demographic change within a 25-year period as a catalyzing event, wherein shifting racial composition in one community triggers a process of change within individual schools in a district. . . . This research project will concentrate on one school district in the Midwest that has a large population of Hmong, Mexican and Albanian students.”

Evans, A. E. (2007). School leaders and their sensemaking about race and demographic change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(2) 159–188.

“The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which school leaders defined and made sense of issues of race and demographic change in their schools. . . . Interviews, documents, and archival data from a larger study provided information on the programs, policies, and practices that schools modified in response to their growing African American population. For the current study, the author specifically examined the words and actions of school leaders to determine how they defined and made sense of the demographic changes taking place. The author also used other information to establish the contexts around these leaders that might help explain their sensemaking. . . . Generally, school leaders’ sensemaking seemed related to the local context and organizational ideology, as well as their racial and role identities. To varying degrees, sensemaking about race influenced school leaders’ willingness to challenge or change status quo social structures within their schools. . . . School leaders must come to understand their own sociopolitical identities and professional contexts, how these shape their view on issues of race, and the implications of their leadership and sensemaking for all students, particularly students of color.

Fimmen, C., Witthuhn, B., Crump, J., Brunn, M., Delaney-Barman, G., et al. (1998). A spatial study of the mobility of Hispanics in Illinois and the implications for educational institutions. Julian Samora Research Institute Working Paper No. 43. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University. [30 pp.].

ERIC No.: ED430740

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/17/94/e6.pdf

“This paper examines the growth and characteristics of the Hispanic population in Illinois and presents a case study of how a rural Illinois community and its *schools* are adapting to an *influx* of mostly Mexican immigrants. . . . As school administrators became aware of the rising numbers, they responded by hiring translators, bilingual aides, and a bilingual coordinator; creating a prekindergarten class for Hispanic students; encouraging parent participation; and developing appropriate curricula and assessment methods. Teachers participated in workshops and conferences about cultural change and the classroom. As staff and administrators gained knowledge and understanding about the needs of language-minority students, they shifted toward a more student-centered philosophy and began developing bilingual and multicultural programs. Interviews with immigrants about experiences in the community, at work, and in school portray the racism encountered by culturally diverse newcomers, but also the efforts of teachers and community members to improve community relations and social integration.”

Fry, R. (2006, October). *The changing landscape of American public education: New students, new schools*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.

<http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/72.pdf>

This report examines the intersection of two trends that have transformed the landscape of American public education in recent years: a rapid increase in enrollment and a surge in the opening of new schools. Using the most detailed data available, it describes the racial and ethnic components of enrollment growth at various levels of the K-12 system. The report then examines the composition of enrollment in newly opened schools as well as older schools still in operation. Finally, the report examines the impact of rapid growth in Hispanic enrollment. The report provides detailed statistics at the state level in appendix tables.

Joshi, A., Eberly, J., & Konzal, J. (2005). Dialogue across cultures: Teachers’ perceptions about communication with diverse families. *Multicultural Education*, 13(2), 11–15.

New Jersey, like many other states, is experiencing a significant influx of new immigrants—from countries such as India, Pakistan, China, Russia, Poland, Nigeria, Liberia, Mexico, Dominican Republic, and Haiti. In addition, New Jersey remains one of the most segregated states in the country, educating the majority of its African-American families in the inner city and first-ring communities that surround the cities. . . . In a survey of teachers, specialists, and administrators in public and private . . . schools serving children from pre-school to 5th grade. . . . This study reveals that the New Jersey teachers who responded have a rhetorical understanding of the important aspects of culture, but lack the ability to interpret that knowledge into practices. The same is true for their understanding of parent involvement practices. They identify communication and parent/teacher conferences as important, but people are left wondering about the specific strategies they use and if they use them for the purpose of cultural interchange.

Kandel, W., & Parrado, E. (2005, August). *Latino population growth and public school response in the nuevo South*. Annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Philadelphia, PA.

<http://www.allacademic.com> [\$]

“The growth of Hispanic school enrollment has increased demand for educational facilities, contributed to school overcrowding, and increased the need for translators and bilingual instructors. Public schools comprise a sizable portion of local tax expenditures, and the accommodation of growing numbers of Hispanic children implies significant long-term social and economic transformations of rural communities. We illustrate these processes by describing nonmetro Hispanic population growth in the South, a region that experienced the highest rates of such growth in the nation during the 1990s. We use decennial Census data to analyze metro and nonmetropolitan county differences in demographic profiles and school enrollment rates between residents and in-migrants. We present ethnographic data collected from two elementary schools in metropolitan North Carolina, and nonmetro Mississippi that illustrate education programming issues confronting school administrators in communities of varying levels of Hispanic population growth and metropolitan status. We contend that public education is symptomatic of broader social services needs of new Hispanic residents.

Kandel, W., & Parrado, E. (2004, August). *New kids in town: Nonmetro Hispanic population growth and public schooling*. Annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, CA.

“Public schools comprise a sizable portion of local tax expenditures, and the accommodation of growing numbers of Hispanic children implies significant long-term social and economic transformations of rural communities. We frame recent migration to the U.S. as a self-selective process that influences the gender, age, and human capital composition of new rural Hispanic residents. We use recent decennial Census data to analyze metro and nonmetropolitan county differences in demographic profiles and school enrollment rates between residents and in-migrants. We present ethnographic data collected from three elementary schools in metropolitan North Carolina, and nonmetro Mississippi and Virginia that illustrate education programming issues confronting school administrators in communities of varying levels of Hispanic population growth and metropolitan status.”

Magnuson, P. (2000, March). The changing face of education: Schools provide unique programs that embrace diversity. *Communicator*, p.1–3, 10

<http://www.naesp.org/ContentLoad.do?contentId=152>

This brief article in the National Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals Association’s newsletter looks at local school responses to marked demographic change.

Merchant, B. (1999). Now you see it; now you don’t: A district’s short-lived commitment to an alternative high school for newly arrived immigrants. *Urban Education*, 34(1), 26–51.

“Describes the *response* of an urban school district to the unexpected enrollment of large numbers of newly arrived immigrants. Focuses on the processes that resulted in the implementation of an alternative high school and its abrupt closure a year later, and explores the implications of these decisions for policy and practice.”

Petersen, G. J., & Fusarelli, L. D. (2001, November). Changing times, changing relationships: An exploration of the relationship between superintendents and boards of education. Annual meet of the University Council for Educational Administration, Cincinnati, OH.

ERIC No.: ED 463583

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/19/f3/b7.pdf

“The relationship between the superintendent and board of education has a significant impact on the quality of a district's educational program. This conceptual paper explores the implications of three distinct trends for that relationship: (1) changing demographics; (2) changes brought about by school reform; and (3) changes in superintendents themselves. The heart of this paper explores the impact of these trends on superintendent-board relationships in the future. After examining current research on superintendent-board relations, the paper considers recent demographic trends and speculates whether changing demographics would alter, in any substantive way, relations between superintendents and boards of education. . . .”

Short, D. J. (2002). Newcomer programs. *Education and Urban Society*, 34 (2), 173–198.

“This article examines the small but growing presence of newcomer programs being implemented in urban middle and high school settings across the United States. The article provides the rationale for the development of newcomer programs for recent immigrant English language learners and a detailed summary of the data collected and analyzed during the course of a national study. The article describes the program designs in urban schools, their educational goals, their instructional practices, their acculturation strategies, and other issues. Vignettes about selected programs will illustrate the data. Implications for current and future education policy and practice will be identified, such as the need for opportunities for fledgling programs to gather information to develop successful practices, the need for more rigorous evaluation of these programs within and across school districts, and the need for more research to help identify the optimal program design for a given group of newcomer students and educational goals.

Wrigley, P. (2000). The challenge of educating English language learners in rural areas. *NABA News*, 2000-2001. [9 p.].

ERIC No.: ED469542

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1a/78/ac.pdf

“Rural school districts are experiencing an influx of language minority students. Rural communities generally have little experience with people from other cultures and have fewer resources and bilingual people. At the district level, leaders who view the influx of immigrants in a positive light are more likely to prepare a well thought out plan for serving their English Language Learners (ELLs). An example shows the steps taken in a rural Virginia district to implement a well-researched program that set the district on the right path for years to come.”

Zehr, M. A. (2005, May). Oklahoma district picks path less followed for English-learners. *Education Week*, 24(34), 20–21.

“In a demographic shift that is ahead of the state as a whole, but representative of many small towns in the region, Hispanics make up nearly 27 percent of the enrollment in the 800-student Hennessey school district, up from 18.2 percent in the 2000-2001 school year. In response to those changes, the district has adjusted how it teaches English-language learners, largely banishing the sink-or-swim approach. The district is one of four in Oklahoma—and one of the

few rural school districts in the region—to launch a two-way language-immersion program. In such programs, children from English- and Spanish-language backgrounds study together to learn both languages. This article describes how the district’s choice of two-way language immersion instead of English-as-a-second-language instruction, which is by far the most common approach throughout Oklahoma and other states in the region, is paying off.”