

TOWARD AN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION AGENDA FOR HISPANIC CHILDREN

Ray Collins & Rose Ribeiro (2007)

Overview

Dramatic growth of the Hispanic population in the United States has begun to alter the landscape for state and local policy makers. This demographic shift is transforming U.S. society and can be particularly seen first among children. This article highlights the significance of the growing Latino population for early care and education programs.

Child Care and Early Education Needs of Hispanics

Four primary issues influence the early care and education needs of Hispanic children and families:

1. Workforce issues – Hispanic families face the same challenges in finding high-quality child care as non-Hispanics with comparable socioeconomic characteristics. In addition, Hispanic families struggle to find child care that is linguistically and culturally compatible.
2. Immigration – Immigrants pose a major challenge for policy makers addressing early education issues. Immigrants are a major component of the labor force but still remain a vastly underserved population by early childhood education programs.
3. Educational Challenges – There are specific challenges to many Latinos such as low rates of family literacy, high rates of suspension, expulsion, and high school dropout rates.
4. English Language Learners – A non-English speaking child entering kindergarten is the most at risk for academic failure and school dropout. English-language fluency serves as a strong predictor of later school performance.

Conclusion/Recommendations

This article included several recommendations for better serving Hispanic children in early education, including the following:

1. Strong early education partnerships among childcare, Head Start, and pre-kindergarten programs.
2. Early learning guidelines for child care and other education programs should consider children's home languages and culture.
3. Parent outreach and involvement efforts should be expanded to include culturally appropriate messages
4. Research should address the scope and quality of services for Hispanics, including the needs of ELL's.

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