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Latino Students in our Public Schools: A Closer Look

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Executive Summary

Interest in and attention to the increasing racial and ethnic diversity in Minnesota has taken center stage in recent years, both academically and politically. Much of this added attention began to emerge shortly after the completion of the 2000 U.S. Census. In May 2001 the State Demographic Center issued a widely disseminated report that clearly documented a virtual doubling between 1990 and 2000 of the number of Minnesotans who identified themselves as either nonwhite or Hispanic (McMurry, 2001). Further, the report went on to document that the number of Minnesotans who identified themselves as Hispanic increased by 166% during the decade, increasing from approximately 54,000 in 1990 to over 143,000 in 2000. And 2004 estimates place the Hispanic/Latino population in Minnesota at 175,000, or more than 3.5% of all Minnesota residents.

This report was designed to examine the influence of a growing Latino enrollment in Minnesota's public schools. Using data from the Minnesota Department of Education, we observed that while overall enrollment numbers in Minnesota have declined approximately 3% since 2001, Latino enrollment actually grew by more than 38% during this same time period. Accordingly, Latino students, who comprised 3.7% of Minnesota students 5 years ago, now comprise 5.3% of all public students.

Unfortunately, the data also suggests that this cohort of Latino students that is growing so rapidly is the same cohort finding the least amount of academic success. The achievement gap in standardized test scores is easily discernable in grade 3 and does not appear to narrow as one examines test scores in grades 5, 8, 10, or graduation rates. In fact, the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership reports that Hispanic students are least likely to enroll in a post-secondary institution in Minnesota following high school graduation (MMEP, 2006).

The study also examined grade progression and mobility among Latino students in grades 9-12. The data documents significant mobility both within and outside of Minnesota during the academic year among these students. Interestingly, Latino students in the metro area are more likely to move across school districts during the academic year, while Latino students in rural districts are more likely to move out of Minnesota (and in some cases out of the United States). In fact in some rural districts more than 20% of the Latino students are reported as moving out of Minnesota during the academic year, or between high school grades. Consequently, such student mobility is quite challenging for those who suggest that stability and academic success go hand in hand.

Overall, the study documents an ethnic group of students where an achievement gap in standardized test scores is discernable quite early, and as one examines test scores in grades 5, 8, and 10, such gaps fail to significantly narrow over time, despite the best efforts of our public schools. Given such a pattern, it appears that strategies such as targeted early childhood education designed to prevent such gaps from occurring might be most effective in the long run.

Introduction

Interest in and attention to the increasing racial and ethnic diversity in Minnesota has taken center stage in recent years, both academically and politically. Much of this added attention began to emerge shortly after the completion of the 2000 U.S. Census. In May 2001 the State Demographic Center issued a widely disseminated report that clearly documented a virtual doubling between 1990 and 2000 of the number of Minnesotans who identified themselves as either nonwhite or Hispanic (McMurry, 2001). Further, the report went on to document that the number of Minnesotans who identified themselves as Hispanic (note: according to the Census, Hispanic/Latino is an ethnic category, not a racial one) increased by 166% during the decade, increasing from approximately 54,000 in 1990 to over 143,000 in 2000. And 2004 estimates place the Hispanic/Latino population in Minnesota at 175,000, or more than 3.5% of all Minnesota residents.

Around that same time the Center for Rural Policy and Development also issued a report on the penetration and economic impact of the Latino workforce in South Central Minnesota (Kielkopf, 2000). That study examined the enormous growth of the Latino workforce in the food processing industry; at that time they represented more than 30% of the entire labor force in that industry.

Since that time, numerous communities throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan region continued to experience a steady increase in the racial and ethnic make-up of their cities. And throughout many parts of rural Minnesota, many once small and culturally homogeneous communities began to transform into truly diverse communities. But as Minnesota began to turn more of its attention to these issues, it became clear that the consequences of diversity were multi-faceted and at times provocative and challenging. Issues of service delivery in the areas of housing, health care, public safety and education were often compounded by language and cultural barriers. And often chief among these concerns cited were the apparent disparities being reported in educational attainment and achievement.

According to a recent paper by the Children, Youth and Family Consortium at the University of Minnesota (Siebenbruner, 2006), educational disparities are defined as "the observed differences in educational opportunities and outcomes among two are more groups." Such disparities are often defined as the "achievement gap" and have been observed and recognized among educational scholars for some time. For example, according to the 2004 Minnesota Education Yearbook, these educational disparities based upon race and ethnicity are quite prevalent and persistent.

As Tables 1 and 2 show, these disparities are evidenced early and are quite persistent and appear to endure throughout one's educational experience. In fact, in 2003, while high school graduation rates for white students in Minnesota were 92%, they were 50% for Hispanic students (Davison, et al.,

Table 1. *2004 Grade 3 MCA: Percentage of students at or above the state achievement standard for math and reading.*

Ethnicity of Student	Math	Reading
White	77%	80%
American Indian	52%	59%
Asian American	57%	54%
African American	39%	46%
Hispanic	45%	43%

Source: 2004 Minnesota Education Yearbook (Davison, et al., 2004)

Table 2. *2004 Grade 8 Basic Skills Test: Percentage of students at or above the state minimum standard for math and reading.*

Ethnicity of Student	Math	Reading
White	78%	87%
American Indian	43%	56%
Asian American	58%	63%
African American	31%	50%
Hispanic	38%	52%

Source: 2004 Minnesota Education Yearbook (Davison, et al., 2004)

Table 3. *Immediate fall enrollment in a post-secondary institution in Minnesota following high school graduation (2004).*

Ethnicity of Student	Percent Enrolled
White	49%
American Indian	35%
Asian American	55%
African American	42%
Hispanic	34%

Source: Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, 2006.

2004).

And more recently, the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership released the *2006 State of Students of Color* report (MMEP, 2006). As Table 3 documents, immediate participation in post-secondary education among Hispanic high school graduates is the lowest among all ethnic and racial cohorts.

Purpose of the Study

Evidence such as that provided above led the Chicano Latino Affairs Council to commission a more comprehensive study on the participation, achievement and funding of Hispanic/Latino students in Minnesota's public schools. As such, the basic or core goals of this study include:

1. To better understand the enrollment patterns of Latino students in Minnesota's public schools.
2. To better understand the academic challenges among Latino students.
3. To examine the revenue sources provided to public schools that can be attributed to Latino enrollment.
4. To learn about programmatic activities undertaken by schools to improve the retention and achievement of Latino students.

Study Methodology

The study was conducted using multiple steps, each phase building upon the other. The first step was to identify school districts in Minnesota that had sufficient proportions of Latino students to warrant administrative attention. In other words, if a school district had only a handful of Latino students, identification of those students would be impossible due to disclosure issues, and more importantly, it would also be unlikely that any programs or programmatic emphasis would be provided to target such students. Accordingly, we methodologically decided that for a school district to have entry into our study it would have to have an enrollment of Latino students that met or exceeded 10% of the entire student enrollment. These districts then became the target of our interests.

Enrollment: Using publicly available data from the Minnesota Department of Education, we then examined the 5-year enrollment trends and characteristics of students who are identified as Hispanic in Minnesota's public schools. One should note that these data do not identify Hispanic students who are being educated in either private schools or charter schools. All students identified in this study are (or were) enrolled in school districts that are characterized by the Minnesota Department of Education as Type 1 or Type 3.

Achievement: We also attempted to examine measures of academic achievement of Latino students in these school districts. Utilizing data from the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) and the Basic Skills Test, we attempted to identify the percentage of Latino students meeting the minimum standards across these school districts of interest.
Attempts were also made to examine the issue of retention of Latino students in the high school grades. Using a customized analysis from the Minnesota Department of Education, all Latino

Table 4. *Latino and overall Student Census 2001-2002 through 2005-2006.*

School Year	Total Enrollment	Latino Enrollment	Pct. Latino
2001-2002	822,940	30,605	3.7%
2002-2003	816,077	33,805	4.1%
2003-2004	809,090	36,674	4.5%
2004-2005	801,191	39,306	4.9%
2005-2006	797,804	42,393	5.3%

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

students were provided a unique ID number which would allow one to follow a specific student from grade to grade and discern retention and dropout patterns. This analysis was conducted across the school districts of interest.

Funding: Attempts were also made to identify what funds, as well as what percentage of total funds, were provided to school districts as a result of Latino student enrollment. This analysis included all funding sources as reported by districts to the Minnesota Department of Education.

Administrator Concerns and Action: Lastly, to better understand the concerns and activities that schools engage in to improve the academic achievement of Latino students, interviews were held with 23 district superintendents and school administrators from districts in the study.

Enrollment

Since the 2001-2002 school year, approximately 75% of all school districts in Minnesota have experienced enrollment decreases, with rural districts experiencing the greatest declines. However, such trends are not the case for the Latino student population. In fact, Table 4 documents that while overall student enrollment declined approximately 3% since 2001, Latino student enrollment increased by more than 38% during this same timeframe. The consequence is that while the Latino population makes up approximately 3.5% of all Minnesotans, Latino students make up more than 5% of Minnesota's total public school enrollment.

However, it is important to recognize that the Latino population is not equitably dispersed geographically throughout the state, the consequence being a number of ethnic clusters in numerous communities. Accordingly, similar clustering can be found in school districts as we attempted to identify public school districts where Latino enrollments comprised at least 10% of total enrollments. This enrollment trend can be found of Figure 1.

As one can see from Figure 1, the number of public school districts that met the 10% enrollment threshold continued to rise, peaking at 36 districts during the 2004-05 school year. And while the number of school districts meeting the 10% threshold declined slightly in 2005-06, it is important to realize that between 2004-05 and 2005-06, overall Latino enrollment increased by approximately 8%, further confirming this clustering effect.

Accordingly, Figure 2 provides some comparisons across districts based on the percentage of Latino students.

Figure 1. *Number of districts where Latino enrollment is at least 10%.*

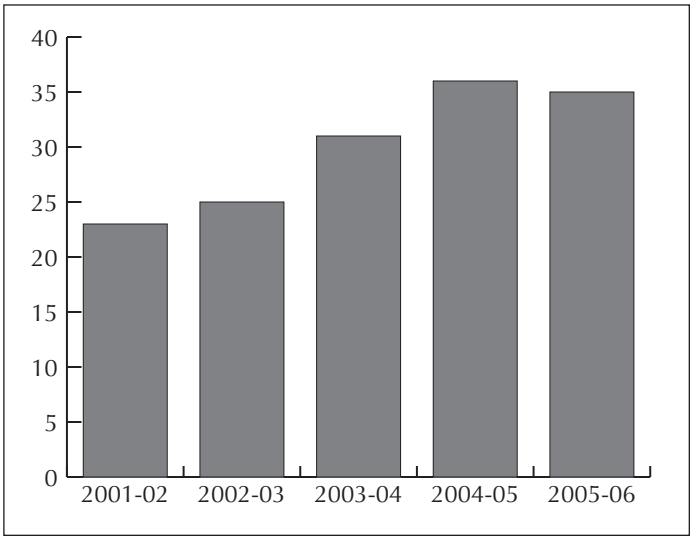
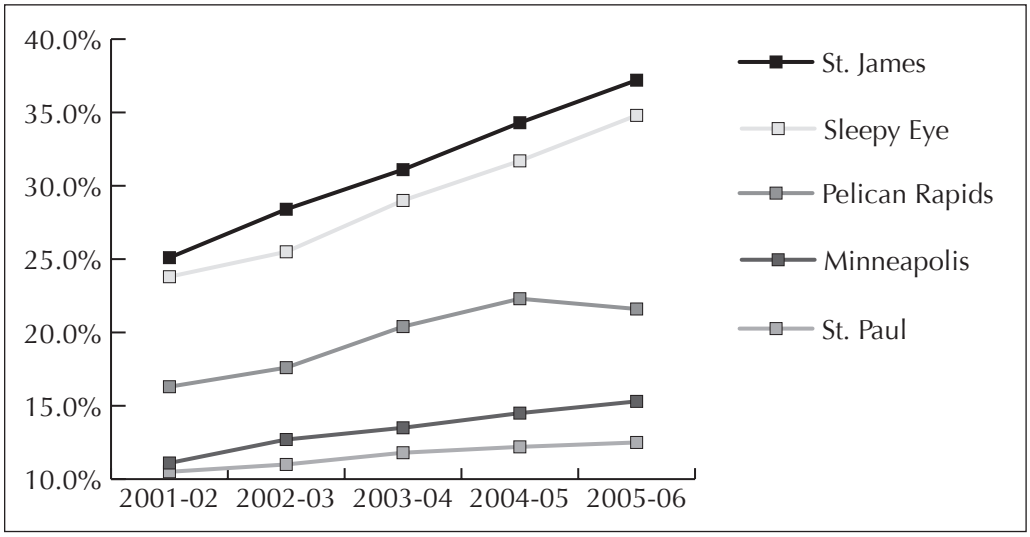


Figure 2. *Latino enrollment comparisons.*



As one can easily see from Figure 2, the two schools with the highest percentage of enrolled Latino students are in Saint James and Sleepy Eye, where 37.2% and 34.8% of all students are Latino. This compares to 15.3% and 12.5% respectively in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

While many Minnesotans may believe that the overwhelming majority of Latinos are residing in the Twin Cities metro, the reality is that there is a large and vibrant Latino community throughout rural Minnesota. In fact, 11 of the 12 school districts with Latino populations comprising at least 20% of total enrollment are located in rural Minnesota; the one metro exception is the Richfield school district, where Latino enrollment is at 20.8%. Table 5 lists

Table 5. *School districts where Latino enrollment equals or exceeds 10% (2005-06).*

School District	Percent Latino	School District	Percent Latino
ST. JAMES	37.2%	SOUTH ST. PAUL	15.7%
SLEEPY EYE	34.8%	GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	15.6%
WORTHINGTON	31.5%	LECENTER	15.3%
MADELIA	29.3%	MINNEAPOLIS	15.3%
LYND	28.6%	BIRD ISLAND-OLIVIA-LAKE LILLIAN	13.6%
WILLMAR	27.3%	BUFFALO LAKE-HECTOR	13.2%
BUTTERFIELD	23.7%	ALBERT LEA	13.1%
RICHFIELD	23.3%	WARREN-ALVARADO-OSLO	13.0%
PELICAN RAPIDS	21.6%	ST. PAUL	12.5%
SIBLEY EAST	21.1%	MELROSE	12.4%
CLIMAX	20.4%	MOUNTAIN LAKE	12.4%
RENVILLE COUNTY WEST	20.4%	TRITON	11.9%
CROOKSTON	18.4%	BROOKLYN CENTER	11.8%
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	17.4%	HERON LAKE-OKABENA	11.6%
FARIBAULT	17.3%	SHAKOPEE	11.3%
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	15.9%	LESUEUR-HENDERSON	10.7%
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	15.8%	EAST GRAND FORKS	10.5%
AUSTIN	15.8%		

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

all 35 school districts that meet the 10% threshold for this study.

There is little question that the Latino student population is growing quite substantially in Minnesota. This is in contrast to the overall enrollment decreases being experienced by a large majority of Minnesota school districts. As noted earlier, approximately 3 out of 4 school districts in Minnesota experienced enrollment declines since 2000, with the overall state enrollment declining 3%. However, Latino enrollment grew by more than 38% during that same period of time.

For school districts that are funded through formulas driven primarily by enrollment numbers, these increases clearly help stabilize both the numbers and funding. In small rural districts, however, the consequences are even greater, since significant increases in the number of Latino students not only counter enrollment decline, but may help avoid the painful discussion around school consolidation.

Two additional points are noteworthy when examining this enrollment data. First, it is important to recognize that while the majority of school districts that meet this 10% enrollment threshold are located outside the Twin Cities metro, this does not mean to suggest the majority of Latino students are located in rural Minnesota. In fact, the twin districts of Minneapolis and St. Paul alone enroll 30% of all the Latino students in Minnesota. Rather, it suggests that it is much easier to meet the 10% threshold in a rural district of 1,000 students than in a metro district of 40,000 students.

Second, it is equally important to recognize that while the focus of this report is on the Latino student population, such students sometimes represent only a fraction of the total number of immigrant or minority students enrolled in Minnesota's schools. A simple reminder of that is in both the Minneapolis and St. Paul districts, where Latinos make up 15% and 12% respectively of total enrollment, but overall minority enrollment is approximately 70% in both districts. Such broad diversity is also evident in some rural communities such as Mountain Lake, where Latino students make up only 40% of all minority student enrollments.

Academic Achievement

Data from the Minnesota Department of Education has long documented an achievement gap between minority and non-minority students in our public schools. However, this analysis attempts to examine academic achievement at the district level utilizing multiple measures of achievement. Table 6 shows the high school graduation rates for Latino students in the 35 districts where Latino enrollment is at least 10%.

As one can see from the graduation data, there is great variability in these rates across districts, as well as across years. Often extreme variability is caused by the relatively small numbers of Latino students in smaller rural school districts, where the outcomes of 2 or 3 Latino students can have a meaningful impact on percentages. And it is precisely for this reason that the Minnesota Department of Education "filters" some of its data for these smaller rural schools. However, sometimes the variability across school districts is not a statistical artifact and the variability discerned is real.

The effects of filtering are best displayed in the data documented on the next few pages examining achievement scores between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students taking the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) tests in grades 3 and 5, or the Basic Skills Tests in grades 8 and 10. We have intentionally shaded the columns for some districts and not others. Those districts that are not

Table 6. *Hispanic/Latino graduation rates by district (2002-2005).*

School District	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
MINNEAPOLIS	20.12%	23.74%	31.34%
SOUTH ST. PAUL	58.82%	66.67%	65.52%
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	60.00%	40.00%	60.00%
SLEEPY EYE	75.00%	100.00%	75.00%
MOUNTAIN LAKE	N/A	N/A	100.00%
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	85.71%	82.35%	79.17%
ALBERT LEA	69.70%	68.75%	51.85%
RICHFIELD	53.33%	63.16%	15.48%
BROOKLYN CENTER	75.00%	57.14%	33.33%
HERON LAKE-OKABENA	100.00%	100.00%	N/A
WILLMAR	50.91%	37.78%	53.06%
LECENTER	100.00%	100.00%	60.00%
AUSTIN	63.16%	57.14%	55.56%
WORTHINGTON	50.00%	31.82%	63.16%
PELICAN RAPIDS	42.86%	75.00%	69.57%
CLIMAX	N/A	100.00%	N/A
CROOKSTON	55.56%	52.94%	50.00%
EAST GRAND FORKS	62.50%	42.86%	50.00%
ST. PAUL	42.21%	55.48%	61.34%
FARIBAULT	28.57%	48.28%	48.00%
SHAKOPEE	75.00%	61.11%	58.82%
MELROSE	0.00%	N/A	100.00%
BUTTERFIELD	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
MADELIA	93.33%	60.00%	75.00%
ST. JAMES	43.75%	50.00%	52.94%
TRITON	100.00%	100.00%	50.00%
BUFFALO LAKE-HECTOR	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
WARREN-ALVARADO-OSLO	0.00%	100.00%	N/A
SIBLEY EAST	66.67%	100.00%	50.00%
LESUEUR-HENDERSON	50.00%	57.14%	50.00%
BIRD ISLAND-OLIVIA-LAKE LILLIAN	100.00%	50.00%	100.00%
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	100.00%	80.00%	60.00%
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	70.00%	63.64%	57.14%
RENVILLE COUNTY WEST	0.00%	40.00%	60.00%

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

shaded are the districts where the Hispanic data has been filtered by the Department of Education. Not surprisingly, one can see that the numbers of Latino students who have taken these standardized tests are quite low. Accordingly, the Department of Education does not disclose the testing results based upon such small numbers.

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Test: Unlike the Basic Skills testing conducted in grades 8 and 10, students do not pass or fail the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment. Rather the MCA is an assessment of student proficiency in the critical learning areas of mathematics, reading and writing. The assessment is scored and then scores are categorized into five proficiency levels, with level "1" documenting the least degree of proficiency and "5" the greatest proficiency. According to testing officials at the Minnesota Department of Education, students who score at level 3 or higher are deemed "proficient" in the subject.

Accordingly, the following pages document the percentage of Hispanic students who meet this basic standard of proficiency and contrast it with the percentage of non-Hispanic students in the same district. **However, when viewing these tables, one additional point is particularly noteworthy: the "non-Hispanic" student population should not be interpreted to mean "White" students.** Clearly in many of the smaller rural districts that might be true, but in many other districts it simply means non-Hispanic and likely includes significant numbers of African-American, Asian and other non-Hispanic student cohorts.

Table 7. *Grade 3 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment math proficiency (2004-05).*

District Name	Number Hispanic Tested	Hispanic Percent Proficient	Number Non-Hispanic Tested	Non-Hispanic Percent Proficient	Achievement Gap (percentage point difference)
PELICAN RAPIDS	19	100.0%	48	100.0%	0.0
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	35	80.0%	128	67.0%	13.0
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	18	72.2%	58	82.9%	-10.6
RENVILLE COUNTY WEST	10	70.0%	28	84.8%	-14.8
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	53	69.8%	225	87.5%	-17.7
CROOKSTON	14	64.3%	56	84.8%	-20.6
ST. JAMES	38	63.2%	34	70.8%	-7.7
MADELIA	16	62.5%	16	100.0%	-37.5
TRITON	16	62.5%	47	79.7%	-17.2
SHAKOPEE	40	60.0%	309	83.5%	-23.5
SOUTH ST. PAUL	34	55.9%	151	74.8%	-18.9
BROOKLYN CENTER	18	55.6%	60	60.0%	-4.4
ST. PAUL	430	52.6%	1493	62.5%	-10.0
WORTHINGTON	63	52.4%	60	80.0%	-27.6
AUSTIN	46	52.2%	170	75.9%	-23.7
ALBERT LEA	28	50.0%	149	77.6%	-27.6
EAST GRAND FORKS	10	50.0%	105	88.2%	-38.2
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	16	50.0%	52	73.2%	-23.2
SLEEPY EYE	13	46.2%	25	83.3%	-37.2
FARIBAULT	58	44.8%	125	67.6%	-22.7
LESUEUR-HENDERSON	18	44.4%	43	89.6%	-45.1
SIBLEY EAST	16	43.8%	52	89.7%	-45.9
MINNEAPOLIS	446	43.5%	1376	59.3%	-15.8
WILLMAR	91	40.7%	146	79.3%	-38.7
BIRD ISLAND-OLIVIA-LAKE LILLIAN	13	38.5%	39	90.7%	-52.2
MELROSE	14	35.7%	70	89.7%	-54.0
RICHFIELD	64	31.3%	156	68.4%	-37.2
MOUNTAIN LAKE	9	NA	27	96.4%	NA
HERON LAKE-OKABENA	4	NA	16	100.0%	NA
LECENTER	8	NA	50	100%	NA
LYND	5	NA	12	100%	NA
CLIMAX	1	NA	0	0.0%	NA
BUTTERFIELD	2	NA	0	0.0%	NA
BUFFALO LAKE-HECTOR	6	NA	37	100%	NA
WARREN-ALVARADO-OSLO	8	NA	27	96.4%	NA

Source: Minnesota Department of Education.

Table 8. *Grade 3 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment reading proficiency (2004-05).*

District Name	Number Hispanic Tested	Hispanic Percent Proficient	Number Non-Hispanic Tested	Non-Hispanic Percent Proficient	Achievement Gap (percentage point difference)
RENVILLE COUNTY WEST	11	81.8%	28	84.8%	-3.0
EAST GRAND FORKS	10	80.0%	105	88.2%	-8.2
PELICAN RAPIDS	19	73.7%	41	85.4%	-11.7
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	17	70.6%	51	72.9%	-2.3
BIRD ISLAND-OLIVIA-LAKE LILLIAN	10	70.0%	36	83.7%	-13.7
TRITON	16	68.8%	45	77.6%	-8.8
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	54	64.8%	214	83.6%	-18.8
SIBLEY EAST	17	64.7%	46	79.3%	-14.6
CROOKSTON	14	64.3%	60	92.3%	-28.0
MADELIA	16	62.5%	15	93.8%	-31.3
ST. JAMES	37	62.2%	41	85.4%	-23.3
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	31	61.3%	119	65.7%	-4.5
ALBERT LEA	28	60.7%	153	79.7%	-19.0
LESUEUR-HENDERSON	16	56.3%	44	91.7%	-35.4
BROOKLYN CENTER	18	55.6%	69	70.4%	-14.9
SHAKOPEE	40	55.0%	295	80.2%	-25.2
WORTHINGTON	62	54.8%	52	69.3%	-14.5
ST. PAUL	420	54.0%	1493	63.5%	-9.5
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	15	53.3%	61	85.9%	-32.6
WILLMAR	88	52.3%	151	83.4%	-31.2
AUSTIN	45	48.9%	175	78.5%	-29.6
FARIBAULT	58	48.3%	134	72.0%	-23.8
SLEEPY EYE	14	42.9%	25	86.2%	-43.3
SOUTH ST. PAUL	33	42.4%	144	70.9%	-28.5
MINNEAPOLIS	445	40.9%	1357	58.9%	-18.0
RICHFIELD	64	35.9%	146	65.8%	-29.8
MELROSE	14	21.4%	64	83.1%	-61.7
MOUNTAIN LAKE	8	NA	22	78.6%	NA
HERON LAKE-OKABENA	4	NA	11	73.3%	NA
LECENTER	7	NA	46	95.8%	NA
LYND	5	NA	11	100.0%	NA
CLIMAX	1	NA	0	0.0%	NA
BUTTERFIELD	2	NA	0	0.0%	NA
BUFFALO LAKE-HECTOR	5	NA	38	100%	NA
WARREN-ALVARADO-OSLO	7	NA	26	92.9%	NA

Table 9. *Grade 5 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment math proficiency (2004-05).*

District Name	Number Hispanic Tested	Hispanic Percent Proficient	Number Non-Hispanic Tested	Non-Hispanic Percent Proficient	Achievement Gap (percentage point difference)
TRITON	11	81.8%	51	78.5%	3.4
MADELIA	21	76.2%	22	91.7%	-15.5
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	32	75.0%	148	78.7%	-3.7
PELICAN RAPIDS	21	71.4%	48	90.6%	-19.1
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	20	65.0%	45	63.4%	1.6
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	53	64.2%	227	85.0%	-20.9
CROOKSTON	19	63.2%	50	84.7%	-21.6
LESUEUR-HENDERSON	14	57.1%	66	84.6%	-27.5
AUSTIN	51	56.9%	204	81.9%	-25.1
SOUTH ST. PAUL	30	56.7%	160	74.4%	-17.8
SHAKOPEE	53	56.6%	290	82.4%	-25.8
FARIBAULT	49	55.1%	165	84.6%	-29.5
BROOKLYN CENTER	11	54.5%	72	62.1%	-7.5
ST. PAUL	387	51.7%	1651	64.7%	-13.0
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	18	50.0%	65	77.4%	-27.4
MINNEAPOLIS	476	48.7%	1470	62.1%	-13.3
ST. JAMES	33	48.5%	49	84.5%	-36.0
SIBLEY EAST	19	47.4%	51	77.3%	-29.9
ALBERT LEA	35	42.9%	165	92.2%	-49.3
WILLMAR	64	42.2%	176	84.6%	-42.4
WORTHINGTON	48	41.7%	78	84.8%	-43.1
SLEEPY EYE	17	41.2%	24	80.0%	-38.8
MELROSE	16	31.3%	52	74.3%	-43.0
RICHFIELD	71	29.6%	155	68.9%	-39.3
MOUNTAIN LAKE	7	NA	37	100%	NA
HERON LAKE-OKABENA	3	NA	18	94.7%	NA
LECENTER	5	NA	49	100%	NA
LYND	3	NA	0	0.0%	NA
CLIMAX	2	NA	0	0.0%	NA
EAST GRAND FORKS	8	NA	109	81.3%	NA
BUTTERFIELD	4	NA	12	100%	NA
BUFFALO LAKE-HECTOR	6	NA	37	92.5%	NA
WARREN-ALVARADO-OSLO	5	NA	22	78.6%	NA
BIRD ISLAND-OLIVIA-LAKE LILLIAN	9	NA	40	87.0%	NA
RENVILLE COUNTY WEST	5	NA	39	84.8%	NA

Table 10. *Grade 5 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment reading proficiency (2004-05).*

District Name	Number Hispanic Tested	Hispanic Percent Proficient	Number Non-Hispanic Tested	Non-Hispanic Percent Proficient	Achievement Gap (percentage point difference)
MADELIA	21	76.2%	24	100.0%	-23.8
CROOKSTON	19	73.7%	49	81.7%	-8.0
TRITON	11	72.7%	47	72.3%	0.4
ALBERT LEA	35	65.7%	161	90.4%	-24.7
BROOKLYN CENTER	11	63.6%	81	70.4%	-6.8
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	18	61.1%	71	84.5%	-23.4
ST. JAMES	33	60.6%	49	86.0%	-25.4
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	53	60.4%	232	86.6%	-26.2
ST. PAUL	379	53.0%	1634	64.8%	-11.8
SHAKOPEE	51	52.9%	297	85.6%	-32.6
SIBLEY EAST	19	52.6%	50	75.8%	-23.1
WORTHINGTON	48	52.1%	77	82.8%	-30.7
WILLMAR	65	47.7%	180	86.5%	-38.8
PELICAN RAPIDS	21	47.6%	45	84.9%	-37.3
FARIBAULT	49	46.9%	158	80.2%	-33.3
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	30	46.7%	139	74.7%	-28.1
LESUEUR-HENDERSON	13	46.2%	63	80.8%	-34.6
AUSTIN	51	45.1%	209	83.9%	-38.8
MELROSE	14	42.9%	47	67.1%	-24.3
MINNEAPOLIS	470	42.3%	1399	59.0%	-16.7
SLEEPY EYE	17	41.2%	24	80.0%	-38.8
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	20	40.0%	53	74.6%	-34.6
RICHFIELD	70	37.1%	166	73.8%	-36.6
SOUTH ST. PAUL	30	36.7%	162	76.1%	-39.4
MOUNTAIN LAKE	5	NA	28	77.8%	NA
HERON LAKE-OKABENA	3	NA	20	100%	NA
LECENTER	5	NA	46	97.9%	NA
LYND	3	NA	0	0.0%	NA
CLIMAX	2	NA	0	0.0%	NA
EAST GRAND FORKS	7	NA	114	85.7%	NA
BUTTERFIELD	4	NA	13	100%	NA
BUFFALO LAKE-HECTOR	3	NA	36	92.3%	NA
WARREN-ALVARADO-OSLO	6	NA	20	71.4%	NA
BIRD ISLAND-OLIVIA-LAKE LILLIAN	9	NA	40	87.0%	NA
RENVILLE COUNTY WEST	5	NA	39	84.8%	NA

In some ways one could argue that the MCA Assessments in grades 3 and 5 represent a starting point in understanding academic achievement among the public school population. At best, these students have been in our school system a short time, and in many cases it may be an immigrant student's first or second year in school. Accordingly, it may not be fair to suggest that MCA scores of students in the 3rd grade reflect activity in the school; rather, they may better reflect skills and learning that these young children bring with them to school.

For the 3rd grade MCA Math Assessment, 27 of 35 districts reported tested results with 18 districts having at least 50% of their Hispanic students achieve the basic standard of proficiency (i.e. levels 3-5). In fact, one should note that the number of districts reaching 50% proficiency is actually higher, as eight of the school districts had their test results "filtered" due to the low numbers of Hispanic students being tested. Similar results are found in the 3rd grade Reading Assessment, with 20 districts reporting at least 50% of their Hispanic students achieving the basic standard of proficiency. However, as one can also see, for most of the districts there is a sizeable achievement gap between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students being tested.

As we look at the 5th grade MCA scores, we see somewhat of a deterioration in achievement, as we now note that only 15 districts report that at least 50% of their Hispanic students met the basic standard for proficiency in math (down from 18 in 3rd grade) and only 12 districts report similarly for 5th grade proficiency in reading (down from 20 in 3rd grade). Such observations are also congruent with changes in the achievement gap between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students. Here we find that while some districts appear to be decreasing the gap between grades 3 and 5, a larger number of districts witnessed a growth or no substantial change in the gap in both reading and math. We also note that while the results for eight districts were filtered in grade 3 due to the low number of Hispanic students being tested, the number of districts being filtered in grade 5 has grown to 11.

It is very difficult to determine the cause of such events as several explanations are plausible. One possible explanation is simply that the majority of Hispanic students are heavily weighted in the early grades, especially grades 1-3, which represents the younger demographics of Hispanic families. Other plausible explanations include the high mobility among these Hispanic/Latino families. Educators often note that stability is a key requisite for academic achievement. Accordingly, children in highly mobile families are disadvantaged, reducing retention rates from year to year, as well as having an adverse impact on MCA scores.

A final possibility simply might be the importance families place on ensuring that their children attend school during these testing periods. Increasingly, school administrators are emphasizing to parents the need to ensure that students in all racial and ethnic cohorts be present during days when such standardized tests are conducted. However, as we see the results from an increasing number of districts being "filtered," over time, one can wonder whether such efforts are successful.

Overall, the data clearly suggests that Latino students are disadvantaged in the elementary grades and for the majority of districts; this disadvantage (as indicated in the size of the achievement gap) does not necessarily decrease over time.

The Minnesota Basic Skills Test (BST): Up until recent legislative changes, the Minnesota Basic Skills Test established the proficiency standard required for high school graduation. Simply put, students did not meet the requirement for graduating high school without passing this test. BST testing begins in the 8th grade with a math and reading test, followed by a writing test in grade 10. The following three tables below examine the percentage of Hispanic and non-Hispanic students who passed the Basic Skills Test in math, reading and writing in the 2004-05 school

Table 11. *Percentage of 8th-grade students passing the Basic Skills Math Test (2004-05).*

District Name	Hispanic Percent Passed	Non-Hispanic Percent Passed	Achievement Gap (percentage point difference)
SOUTH ST. PAUL	63.0%	74.4%	-11.5
SIBLEY EAST	54.6%	75.6%	-21.1
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	45.6%	70.3%	-24.7
BROOKLYN CENTER	45.5%	54.6%	-9.2
MADELIA	45.5%	64.3%	-18.8
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	44.4%	58.9%	-14.5
MINNEAPOLIS	41.1%	49.0%	-7.9
SLEEPY EYE	40.0%	74.2%	-34.2
ST. PAUL	40.0%	49.3%	-9.3
SHAKOPEE	40.0%	76.9%	-36.9
BIRD ISLAND-OLIVIA-LAKE LILLIAN	40.0%	84.4%	-44.4
ALBERT LEA	37.5%	74.9%	-37.4
AUSTIN	35.5%	75.2%	-39.7
WORTHINGTON	35.4%	79.6%	-44.2
RICHFIELD	34.7%	68.4%	-33.7
FARIBAULT	31.7%	68.5%	-36.8
PELICAN RAPIDS	31.3%	76.7%	-45.5
WILLMAR	30.1%	74.8%	-44.6
MELROSE	30.0%	85.8%	-55.8
EAST GRAND FORKS	25.0%	83.1%	-58.1
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	25.0%	78.8%	-53.8
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	25.0%	78.5%	-53.5
CROOKSTON	24.0%	73.3%	-49.3
ST. JAMES	11.5%	73.3%	-61.8
MOUNTAIN LAKE	N/A	N/A	N/A
HERON LAKE-OKABENA	N/A	N/A	N/A
LECENTER	N/A	N/A	N/A
LYND	N/A	N/A	N/A
BUTTERFIELD	N/A	N/A	N/A
TRITON	N/A	N/A	N/A
BUFFALO LAKE-HECTOR	N/A	N/A	N/A
WARREN-ALVARADO-OSLO	N/A	N/A	N/A
LESUEUR-HENDERSON	N/A	N/A	N/A
RENVILLE COUNTY WEST	N/A	N/A	N/A
CLIMAX	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

year. Again, note that the shaded area represents BST test results that were not subject to filtering. Also note that the number of districts that are filtered increase significantly as we move from the middle/junior high school years (grade 8) to the high school years (grade 10).

Table 12. *Percentage of 8th-grade students passing the Basic Skills Reading Test (2004-05).*

District Name	Hispanic Percent Passed	Non-Hispanic Percent Passed	Achievement Gap (percentage point difference)
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	83.3%	76.1%	7.2
MADELIA	81.8%	82.8%	-0.9
SLEEPY EYE	80.0%	90.3%	-10.3
ALBERT LEA	72.7%	91.6%	-18.9
SIBLEY EAST	70.0%	88.0%	-18.0
BIRD ISLAND-OLIVIA-LAKE LILLIAN	70.0%	84.8%	-14.8
SOUTH ST. PAUL	69.2%	81.7%	-12.4
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	66.0%	86.4%	-20.4
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	63.6%	86.1%	-22.4
ST. PAUL	61.6%	65.4%	-3.8
EAST GRAND FORKS	60.0%	91.9%	-31.9
FARIBAULT	60.0%	80.6%	-20.6
AUSTIN	58.1%	83.6%	-25.5
MINNEAPOLIS	57.2%	64.3%	-7.1
PELICAN RAPIDS	56.3%	90.5%	-34.3
BROOKLYN CENTER	54.6%	61.7%	-7.2
WORTHINGTON	54.6%	86.1%	-31.6
SHAKOPEE	54.6%	88.1%	-33.5
RICHFIELD	50.0%	79.7%	-29.7
CROOKSTON	48.0%	86.2%	-38.2
WILLMAR	43.2%	84.8%	-41.6
ST. JAMES	40.0%	84.9%	-44.9
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	33.3%	88.0%	-54.7
MOUNTAIN LAKE	N/A	N/A	N/A
HERON LAKE-OKABENA	N/A	N/A	N/A
LECENTER	N/A	N/A	N/A
LYND	N/A	N/A	N/A
MELROSE	N/A	N/A	N/A
BUTTERFIELD	N/A	N/A	N/A
TRITON	N/A	N/A	N/A
BUFFALO LAKE-HECTOR	N/A	N/A	N/A
WARREN-ALVARADO-OSLO	N/A	N/A	N/A
LESUEUR-HENDERSON	N/A	N/A	N/A
RENVILLE COUNTY WEST	N/A	N/A	N/A
CLIMAX	N/A	NA	N/A

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

Table 13. *Percentage of 10th-grade students passing the Basic Skills Writing Test (2004-05).*

District Name	Hispanic Percent Passed	Non-Hispanic Percent Passed	Achievement Gap (percentage point difference)
CROOKSTON	84.6%	95.9%	-11.3
SOUTH ST. PAUL	78.6%	92.8%	-14.3
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	76.9%	94.9%	-18.0
ALBERT LEA	75.0%	96.0%	-21.0
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	72.6%	89.0%	-16.4
ST. PAUL	71.9%	81.1%	-9.3
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	68.8%	79.9%	-11.2
ST. JAMES	68.2%	90.1%	-21.9
PELICAN RAPIDS	66.7%	91.8%	-25.1
WORTHINGTON	64.7%	91.6%	-26.9
FARIBAULT	64.3%	92.4%	-28.1
WILLMAR	63.5%	94.1%	-30.6
MINNEAPOLIS	60.7%	79.3%	-18.6
SHAKOPEE	47.8%	91.6%	-43.8
RICHFIELD	47.4%	86.1%	-38.7
EAST GRAND FORKS	45.5%	96.4%	-50.9
AUSTIN	39.3%	82.5%	-43.2
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	38.5%	90.9%	-52.4
SLEEPY EYE	N/A	N/A	N/A
MOUNTAIN LAKE	N/A	N/A	N/A
BROOKLYN CENTER	N/A	N/A	N/A
HERON LAKE-OKABENA	N/A	N/A	N/A
LECENTER	N/A	N/A	N/A
CLIMAX	N/A	N/A	N/A
MELROSE	N/A	N/A	N/A
MADELIA	N/A	N/A	N/A
TRITON	N/A	N/A	N/A
SIBLEY EAST	N/A	N/A	N/A
LESUEUR-HENDERSON	N/A	N/A	N/A
BIRD ISLAND-OLIVIA-LAKE LILLIAN	N/A	N/A	N/A
RENVILLE COUNTY WEST	N/A	N/A	N/A
BUTTERFIELD	N/A	N/A	N/A
BUFFALO LAKE-HECTOR	N/A	N/A	N/A
WARREN-ALVARADO-OSLO	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

As noted above, the Basic Skills Test is in fact a "pass/fail" test, which needs to be passed to meet the requirements for high school graduation. Accordingly, unlike the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment examination, the consequences of not passing the test are obvious to the student, his or her family and the school administration.

In examining these three tables, we first note that Table 11 documents only two school districts in our study (South St. Paul and Sibley East) reporting at least 50% of their Latino students meeting the minimum standard required to pass the 8th-grade Basic Skills Math Test. Further we see that the size of the achievement gap is quite substantial, with 10 of the 24 districts reporting having an achievement gap of at least 40 percentage points. This gap is considerably larger than the gap observed in earlier grades.

Contrast this with the results of the 8th-grade Basic Skills Reading Test. Here we find that 19 of the 23 districts whose scores were unfiltered reported at least 50% of their Latino students meeting the minimum standards required to pass. Further, the achievement gap in reading, while still substantial, is not as large as the gap observed with the math test.

Lastly, Table 13 reports the results of the 10th-grade Basic Skills Writing Test. The first observation noted when examining this table is the large number of districts whose results are not reported due to disclosure issues. For more than half of these districts, there simply were not enough Latino 10th Graders taking the writing test to report the testing results. This may be a function of a school retention issue or simply student testing avoidance; we simply don't know. However, when noting the number of districts whose results are filtered by the Department of Education, there is an unmistakable pattern of increased filtering as we move from the early grades to the later grades. Specifically, we note that in grades 3 and 5 there were 10-11 districts that were filtered. This number increased in the 8th grade and grew again to 16 in the 10th grade. This observation may simply reflect either test avoidance or a problem with grade retention, the focus of the next analysis.

Through examination of standardized testing results for grades 3, 5, 8 and 10 across the 35 districts in our study, a clearer picture begins to emerge. Simply stated, Latino students appear to start their school experience academically disadvantaged, as indicated by 3rd-grade test scores, where the achievement gap averages approximately 30 percentage points between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students. Unfortunately, this achievement gap does not appear to decrease over time in most districts, and in many districts it actually increases. Accordingly, large achievement gaps are found when examining results of the Minnesota Basic Skills Test. Further examination documents that as each year passes, fewer and fewer Latino students are taking these standardized tests. Accordingly, the number of districts where the results are "filtered" (i.e., not publicly available) steadily increases from grade 3, to grade 5, to grade 8, to a point where half of the districts in the study have their results filtered by grade 10.

Such results are somewhat disconcerting. However, one does see a bright spot when examining the graduation data. Here we see a very interesting pattern which seems to suggest that if a Latino student does stay in school through grade 12, for most districts there is a reasonable chance that the student will graduate. Accordingly, the next analysis will examine student grade progression and student retention.

Grade Progression, School Retention and Student Mobility

As noted above, the graduation data tends to suggest that in many (but certainly not all) school districts, if a Latino student stays in school through grade 12, there is a reasonable chance that the student will graduate. However, discerning grade progression and school retention patterns across districts is extremely difficult. Specifically, the problem lies with the inability to identify individual students. For example, if there were 10 Latino students in the 9th grade and 10 Latino students the following year in the 10th grade, does it mean that all 10 Latino students progressed from grade 9 to 10? Is it possible that five of the students left the district but were replaced with five new Latino 10th graders? Essentially the answer is unknowable.

To address this methodological issue, we worked with data analysts from the Minnesota Department of Education to construct a database that would allow us to follow individual students in grades 9 through 12, from 2002 through 2005. A false identification number was created for each Latino student, allowing us to track them from year to year without being able to individually identify the actual student.

Examining the students over the 4-year period created in excess of 40,000 student records. In the end the data proved very useful, but following students was much more complicated than we anticipated. Specifically, students sometimes dropped out of school and then returned multiple times in the same year, creating duplicate numbers in the database. Similarly some students would leave the district and then mysteriously return, again leading to multiple events in the same grade for the same school year. Accordingly, one must examine this data with an eye toward the trends, rather than the precise estimates. Essentially, while we have confidence in the patterns presented in this analysis, the precise percentages may be a bit skewed, and in fact, the fate of some of the students were simply undetermined, as we were unable to follow some students to a final conclusion.

Caveats to the Analysis: During a Latino student's high school year, several events could occur:

- The student can make the logical progression to the next grade in the same school district at the end of the year;
- The student can remain in the same grade the following year in the same school district;
- The student can progress to the next grade or remain in the same grade the next year in a different school district;
- The student can drop out of school;
- The student can leave the state or the country;
- The student might enroll in a non-public school or alternative learning environment;
- The student may be involved in more than one of the above events in the same year.

Accordingly, following these students is much more complicated than one would think, and trying to define specific percentages is even harder. Essentially, the denominator is the number of unique Latino students in each grade; however, the numerator is the number of events. While many students only experience one event per grade (e.g., progressing to the next grade or dropping out of school), other students experience multiple events in the same year (e.g., many students leave the district or the country multiple times in the same year).

These difficulties lead us to have confidence in the general trends that are discerned in the analysis below. However, we have somewhat less confidence in the precise percentages reported, as many students appear in the database multiple times with multiple codes, making it very difficult, if not impossible to make a definitive determination.

Lastly, note that in this analysis we have only analyzed 23 school districts instead of 35. The reason for this deals with the actual enrollment numbers in grades 9-12. For some of the smaller districts the enrollment numbers in a specific grade are simply too small to analyze. Therefore, we made a somewhat arbitrary decision as to which districts would be included and which ones were simply too small to warrant inclusion in the analysis.

Table 14 documents the year-to-year progression of Latino students in high school. Essentially this table shows what percentage of Latino students progressed from one grade to the next in the same school district. Accordingly, the column titled "9th to 10th" reports the percentage of Latino students in the 9th grade that returned the next year to enter the 10th grade in the same school district. So as one can see, for most districts in the study the majority of Latino students who were in the 9th grade did not appear in the 10th grade in the same district in following year. Of course, this does not suggest that the student dropped out, but rather the student may have stayed in the same grade, moved to another district, left Minnesota or left the U.S., or possibly dropped out. The other columns document similar grade progression, i.e., students in the 10th grade who returned for the 11th grade; students in the

Table 14. *Student grade progression by district (2002-2005).*

District Name	9th to 10th	10th to 11th	11th to 12th	Graduating
MINNEAPOLIS	35.2%	34.0%	39.8%	27.1%
SOUTH ST. PAUL	49.6%	48.1%	46.6%	50.5%
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	57.3%	46.6%	44.3%	54.9%
SLEEPY EYE	44.9%	39.0%	51.9%	94.4%
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	50.0%	47.0%	35.6%	68.2%
ALBERT LEA	40.6%	33.1%	33.1%	62.0%
RICHFIELD	30.4%	41.2%	35.7%	22.1%
BROOKLYN CENTER	53.8%	38.5%	33.3%	40.0%
WILLMAR	28.5%	24.6%	20.6%	53.7%
AUSTIN	34.7%	32.5%	31.7%	62.5%
WORTHINGTON	42.6%	36.6%	26.0%	49.1%
PELICAN RAPIDS	60.0%	44.2%	52.5%	80.0%
CROOKSTON	33.3%	35.6%	36.6%	38.4%
EAST GRAND FORKS	30.1%	32.7%	40.7%	68.2%
ST. PAUL	27.1%	27.2%	23.5%	40.4%
FARIBAULT	49.7%	42.1%	28.7%	72.0%
SHAKOPEE	49.6%	48.7%	43.7%	52.4%
MELROSE	37.7%	41.7%	43.5%	69.2%
MADELIA	69.2%	45.6%	56.3%	72.1%
ST. JAMES	53.3%	45.5%	43.2%	61.2%
SIBLEY EAST	41.3%	40.5%	42.9%	47.8%
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	51.4%	45.3%	35.9%	47.4%
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	47.4%	31.8%	40.7%	64.6%

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

11th grade who returned for the 12th grade; and finally students in the 12th grade who graduated later that academic year.

Interestingly, there appears to be a general pattern emerging for many districts that suggests that the transition from 10th grade to 11th grade is the most problematic, meaning that grade retention is lower in the 10th- to 11th–grade transition than any of the others. While this is the case for many of the districts, it is not universally true. Some suggest that the rationale for this observation lies with the fact that students reach the age of 16 during this transition and therefore are no longer compelled to attend school. However, regardless of the rationale, the data provides some, but not universal support for this theory.

Also noteworthy is the percentage of Latino 12th graders who graduate in their senior year. As one can see, this data seems to be congruent with earlier graduation data that again suggests that if Latino students progress through high school to reach the 12th grade, there is a reasonable chance that they will graduate.

Table 15 documents by grade the percentage of Latino students who dropped out. As one can see, the percentage of students who drop out is generally higher in the 10th and 11th grades than in earlier years. This again bolsters the notion

Table 15. *Student dropouts by grade (2002-2005).*

District Name	9th grade	10th grade	11th grade	12th grade
MINNEAPOLIS	16.7%	23.1%	25.7%	48.8%
SOUTH ST. PAUL	7.1%	6.8%	11.9%	21.6%
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	2.4%	12.5%	18.6%	17.6%
SLEEPY EYE	2.0%	2.4%	7.4%	0.0%
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	1.5%	3.5%	4.9%	6.5%
ALBERT LEA	2.4%	10.8%	10.5%	10.2%
RICHFIELD	25.9%	14.5%	15.9%	52.5%
BROOKLYN CENTER	15.4%	15.4%	0.0%	20.0%
WILLMAR	9.2%	17.7%	20.2%	18.3%
AUSTIN	17.9%	27.0%	15.9%	8.9%
WORTHINGTON	9.4%	17.2%	33.6%	36.6%
PELICAN RAPIDS	10.0%	19.8%	6.6%	12.5%
CROOKSTON	21.6%	40.6%	39.0%	43.0%
EAST GRAND FORKS	24.1%	13.5%	18.5%	4.5%
ST. PAUL	10.5%	16.7%	31.5%	46.1%
FARIBAULT	5.2%	14.5%	18.9%	29.3%
SHAKOPEE	11.8%	6.0%	10.3%	12.7%
MELROSE	1.9%	5.6%	0.0%	15.4%
MADELIA	3.8%	14.0%	12.5%	11.6%
ST. JAMES	8.4%	18.2%	12.2%	12.2%
SIBLEY EAST	6.5%	2.7%	0.0%	8.7%
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	14.9%	17.0%	5.1%	15.8%
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	4.2%	15.9%	13.6%	10.4%

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

that for many Latino students, reaching the age of 16 is pivotal in their decision to stay in school. Interestingly, however, for some districts significant percentages of Latino students continue to drop out as late as the 12th grade. In fact, some studies suggest that this behavior may be attributed to the pass/fail nature of proficiency testing as a requirement for graduation. Here the suggestion is that if the student does not pass the test by the 11th or 12th grade to meet the graduation requirement, the incentive to stay disappears and the student is more likely to drop out.

Tables 16 and 17 examine aspects of Latino student mobility from grade to grade in the high school years. Specifically, Table 16 documents the movement of Latino students out of the school district from grade to grade, while Table 17 documents their movement out of the state of Minnesota and/or out of the United States. As one can see, there is considerably more movement among Latino students in and out of Minnesota or the U.S. than mobility out of the district but within the state of Minnesota.

In examining the data, it is important to recognize that these percentages actually reflect the percentage of times Latino student mobility is documented and not the percentage of Latino students who move. The result is that there are some Latino students in clearly identified school districts that are highly mobile, and in fact,

Table 16. *Latino student movement out of the school district (2002-2005).*

District Name	9th grade	10th grade	11th grade	12th grade
MINNEAPOLIS	7.1%	6.3%	4.9%	3.8%
SOUTH ST. PAUL	6.3%	3.0%	1.7%	4.1%
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	3.7%	3.4%	1.4%	2.0%
SLEEPY EYE	0.0%	2.4%	3.7%	0.0%
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	8.0%	7.0%	6.1%	2.8%
ALBERT LEA	9.1%	12.7%	6.8%	5.6%
RICHFIELD	5.7%	7.2%	6.4%	1.0%
BROOKLYN CENTER	7.7%	0.0%	22.2%	20.0%
WILLMAR	18.1%	23.5%	18.3%	15.2%
AUSTIN	6.4%	4.8%	3.7%	1.8%
WORTHINGTON	3.5%	3.8%	1.4%	6.3%
PELICAN RAPIDS	2.5%	4.7%	9.8%	0.0%
CROOKSTON	3.9%	2.0%	2.4%	5.8%
EAST GRAND FORKS	6.0%	9.6%	0.0%	0.0%
ST. PAUL	4.2%	4.9%	2.9%	2.9%
FARIBAULT	4.6%	4.8%	5.7%	7.3%
SHAKOPEE	4.7%	4.3%	9.2%	1.6%
MELROSE	1.9%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%
MADELIA	9.6%	14.0%	8.3%	2.3%
ST. JAMES	7.5%	5.1%	4.1%	2.0%
SIBLEY EAST	2.2%	5.4%	3.6%	17.4%
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	4.1%	7.5%	5.1%	5.3%
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	3.2%	0.0%	1.7%	2.1%

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

leave Minnesota and/or the United States and subsequently return over and over. Consequently, these very mobile students increase the percentages for those districts.

For those educators who firmly believe that stability enhances academic success, such mobility is not welcome.

An interesting pattern observed in this mobility data is the difference between students enrolled in metro area districts and those enrolled in rural districts. As one can clearly see, metro area Latino students who leave the local school district are much more likely to remain in Minnesota. However, Latino students located in rural districts are much more likely to express their mobility by leaving the state and or the U.S. entirely. Such differences in mobility patterns might reflect the differences in social networks and the economic opportunities afforded these families, but of course, that is simply speculative.

A final note of caution as one examines this data on grade progression, school retention and student mobility. One can quickly observe that if you attempt to add up all the percentages for a specific district, you will discover that they do not equal 100. The reasons for this are multiple. First and foremost, the categories are not mutually exclusive, meaning that multiple events can occur to the same student in the same grade for the same year. Thus a student who drops out early in the

Table 17. *Latino student movement out of Minnesota or the United States (2002-2005).*

District Name	9th grade	10th grade	11th grade	12th grade
MINNEAPOLIS	6.7%	4.9%	3.4%	2.5%
SOUTH ST. PAUL	0.8%	1.5%	1.7%	1.0%
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	0.0%	2.3%	2.9%	3.9%
SLEEPY EYE	36.7%	14.6%	18.5%	5.6%
WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HTS.-EAGAN	5.0%	5.5%	4.9%	3.7%
ALBERT LEA	14.5%	8.9%	5.3%	7.4%
RICHFIELD	2.8%	4.5%	6.4%	6.9%
BROOKLYN CENTER	0.0%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%
WILLMAR	13.9%	8.8%	8.9%	2.4%
AUSTIN	19.1%	7.9%	7.3%	0.0%
WORTHINGTON	15.3%	12.4%	4.8%	10.7%
PELICAN RAPIDS	15.0%	10.5%	19.7%	2.5%
CROOKSTON	18.6%	21.8%	14.6%	10.5%
EAST GRAND FORKS	27.7%	13.5%	11.1%	22.7%
ST. PAUL	3.9%	4.0%	2.3%	2.4%
FARIBAULT	13.1%	13.8%	13.1%	9.8%
SHAKOPEE	9.4%	12.0%	4.6%	9.5%
MELROSE	11.3%	13.9%	17.4%	0.0%
MADELIA	3.8%	14.0%	4.2%	2.3%
ST. JAMES	15.0%	11.1%	6.8%	2.0%
SIBLEY EAST	15.2%	16.2%	28.6%	8.7%
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	2.7%	3.8%	10.3%	0.0%
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	22.1%	13.6%	10.2%	4.2%

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

year does not exclude him or her from re-enrolling later in the same year and then leaving the district entirely. Accordingly, the percentages have to be thought of as the percentage of events and not necessarily the percentage of students (while in some cases they are one and the same). Secondly, there are other events coded in the database that we did not report, such as students who stayed in school the following year, but did not experience grade progression.

For these reasons we encourage the reader to understand the patterns in the data rather than closely scrutinizing the percentages.

Funding

Revenues to operate Minnesota's public schools come from a variety of sources and are channeled through a complex formula, making it somewhat difficult to identify revenues resulting from Latino enrollment. These revenue sources include:

- the state basic funding formula;
- a wide variety of state aid programs designed to support and somewhat equalize funding across districts based upon the unique composition of the enrolled student population, as well as the property valuations in the district;
- local revenues, primarily through local tax levies.

Accordingly, attempting to identify specific funding sources attributable to the presence of Latino students is not as simple as taking total general education revenues and dividing it by the number of students.

We have attempted in this analysis to examine only revenues that fall within the "General Education" portion of all school revenues. Therefore, revenues associated with, for example, building construction and maintenance or student transportation is excluded. With this in mind we have identified four primary funding streams for this analysis:

1. **The Basic Funding Formula** – This revenue stream is provided to all public school districts on a per-capita basis simply determined by enrollment. As such, we have attributed the amount of funding as a result of Latino students in this category on a per-capita basis. Operationally, if 15% of students are Latino, then 15% of the basic formula funding is attributed to the Latino students.
2. **Limited English Proficiency (LEP)** – LEP aid is provided to school districts that have students who demonstrate limited proficiency speaking, reading and writing in English. Accordingly, this funding is provided as a result of a district enrolling a wide variety of such students, including but not limited to Latinos. To calculate the percentage of LEP funding attributed to Latino students, we divided the number of Latino students by the total number of minority students in the district to establish a percentage. This percentage was then applied to the total LEP funding for the district.
3. **Compensatory Aid** – Compensatory aid is provided to districts as a result of enrolling low-income students. This aid is generally associated with students eligible for either free or reduced-cost lunch. As this aid is a function of income rather than race, ethnicity or language spoken, it is difficult to estimate the number of Latino students who qualify. Clearly, not all Latino students qualify. In fact in several districts the number of Latino students actually exceeds the number of students qualifying. Accordingly, we simply estimated that 75% of Latinos qualify.
4. **Integration Funding** – Integration revenue was established in 1997 by the Minnesota State Legislature to enhance cultural integration between districts that had concentrations of minority students and their adjacent districts. The Legislative Auditor's Office recently examined the program and determined that the legislative intent for the program is somewhat

Table 18. *General education funding distribution attributed to Hispanic/Latino students (2005-06).*

District Name	Hispanic share of total enrollment	Hispanic share of Basic Funding	Hispanic share of LEP Funding	Hispanic share of Integration Aid	Hispanic share of Compensatory Aid	Hispanic Basic + LEP + Integration + Compensatory	Hispanic Share of Total General Ed. Funding
MINNEAPOLIS	15.3%	$31,276,577	$1,317,118	$4,310,922	$10,234,915	$47,139,532	16.2%
SOUTH ST. PAUL	15.7%	$2,746,198	$84,864	$283,787	$312,673	$3,427,522	17.7%
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	15.9%	$2,577,922	$140,252	$126,456	$529,704	$3,374,335	17.0%
SLEEPY EYE	34.8%	$1,175,810	$69,191	$84,819	$177,174	$1,506,994	38.7%
MOUNTAIN LAKE	12.4%	$345,671	$12,699	$31,666	$56,135	$446,170	13.8%
WEST ST. PAUL	15.8%	$4,238,122	$116,959	$361,058	$474,337	$5,190,476	17.6%
ALBERT LEA	13.1%	$2,557,067	$95,620	$0	$325,712	$2,978,399	14.1%
RICHFIELD	23.3%	$5,233,019	$292,399	$259,277	$967,691	$6,752,386	25.2%
BROOKLYN CENTER	11.8%	$1,078,729	$45,344	$41,062	$255,784	$1,420,919	12.2%
HERON LAKE-OKABENA	11.6%	$201,067	$24,131	$0	$35,515	$260,713	13.2%
WILLMAR	27.3%	$6,124,758	$318,739	$523,126	$1,121,303	$8,087,926	30.9%
LECENTER	15.3%	$577,948	$49,152	$0	$52,976	$680,075	17.0%
LYND	28.6%	$215,795	$15,214	$17,480	$38,161	$286,650	30.9%
AUSTIN	15.8%	$3,621,233	$192,216	$0	$542,047	$4,355,496	17.0%
WORTHINGTON	31.5%	$3,855,463	$313,016	$224,976	$679,207	$5,072,662	34.8%
PELICAN RAPIDS	21.6%	$1,310,753	$183,768	$35,664	$202,488	$1,732,674	25.0%
CLIMAX	20.4%	$172,051	$0	$0	$40,153	$212,204	21.1%
CROOKSTON	18.4%	$1,452,333	$69,084	$0	$217,463	$1,738,880	19.8%
EAST GRAND FORKS	10.5%	$973,669	$11,184	$0	$95,079	$1,079,932	11.1%
ST. PAUL	12.5%	$28,438,751	$1,313,284	$3,600,377	$7,732,167	$41,084,578	13.0%
FARIBAULT	17.3%	$3,961,718	$280,269	$0	$508,690	$4,750,677	19.0%
SHAKOPEE	11.3%	$3,415,310	$234,512	$13,426	$303,303	$3,966,551	12.3%
MELROSE	12.4%	$1,027,582	$113,049	$0	$121,438	$1,262,069	14.1%
BUTTERFIELD	23.7%	$257,239	$20,357	$20,824	$59,024	$357,445	26.8%
MADELIA	29.3%	$960,102	$54,779	$83,562	$127,040	$1,225,482	33.2%
ST. JAMES	37.2%	$2,580,783	$180,186	$77,622	$422,208	$3,260,800	40.7%
TRITON	11.9%	$735,364	$51,080	$0	$83,629	$870,072	13.2%
BUFFALO LAKE-HECTOR	13.2%	$403,102	$26,000	$0	$56,156	$485,259	14.5%
WARREN-ALVARADO-	13.0%	$365,571	$14,147	$0	$53,580	$433,298	13.8%
SIBLEY EAST	21.1%	$1,465,021	$118,064	$0	$145,838	$1,728,923	23.1%
LESUEUR-HENDERSON	10.7%	$776,686	$64,698	$0	$65,912	$907,296	11.8%
OLIVIA-BIRD ISLAND	13.6%	$655,690	$25,386	$0	$103,235	$784,310	14.8%
LONG PRAIRIE-GREY EAGLE	17.4%	$1,292,686	$112,133	$0	$215,115	$1,619,934	19.1%
GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE	15.6%	$1,458,612	$71,432	$0	$141,000	$1,671,044	16.8%
RENVILLE COUNTY WEST	20.4%	$743,470	$30,252	$0	$135,377	$909,099	22.0%

ambiguous, and consequently, it is impossible to determine if districts are utilizing the funds within the legislative intent. Interestingly, not all districts with significant minority enrollments receive Integration revenue. In fact, half of the districts in the study (18) did not receive any integration revenue in 2005-06. Accordingly, for those districts that receive integration revenue, we simply divided Latino enrollment into total minority enrollment for each district and applied the associated percentage to the integration revenue to determine the integration funding that results from Latino enrollment.

Table 18 documents the examination of public school funding that we attributed to Latino student enrollment for the 35 districts where Latino students comprise at least 10% of total enrollment. As one can see, the first column simply reports the percentage of Latino enrollment and the last two columns estimate the amount and percentage of general education funding that is attributable to the enrollment of Latino students. In general, the percentage of funding attributable to Latino students is slightly greater than the percentage of Latino enrollment. That is primarily due to the state aid associated with the enrollment of minority or low-income students. But as noted earlier, there is little question that for many districts the enrollment of Latino students and the subsequent funding that follows has stabilized enrollment declines in some districts and has helped smaller districts avoid consolidation discussions that they may have otherwise had.

Interestingly, as noted earlier, integration funding, while somewhat controversial, is not available for half of these districts. In fact there are several districts where Latino students comprise more than 20% of total enrollment (e.g. Sibley East or Renville County West) where such funding is unavailable. Accordingly, one might wonder about the programmatic rationale for the distribution of these funds.

Lastly, while one might want to more closely examine the relationship between funding for minority students and academic achievement, some correlations are not easily made. As noted earlier, the overall data trends seem to suggest that many Latino students enter our public schools in an academically disadvantaged position and that for most districts this achievement gap does not appear to narrow over time. In fact, to the contrary, this gap seems to widen in many districts. Consequently, one might suggest that funding to close this gap would have to be considerably more targeted than it is right now.

Summary & Conclusions:

This study attempted to objectively examine the status and achievement of Latino students in our public schools. As such, the data tells an interesting but somewhat disconcerting story. That story begins by documenting a substantial and rapid growth among Latinos at a time when the state's overall enrollment is in a slow but steady decline. Specifically, from 2001 to 2006 Latino enrollments increased 38.5% while the state's overall enrollment declined 3%. Accordingly the Latino student population increased in Minnesota from 3.7% to 5.3% of all public school students.

Unfortunately, the study results also suggest that this same demographic cohort that seems to be rapidly increasing is also finding the least amount of academic success in our schools. The data documents that this academic deficit starts quite early and by the time students take the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment exams in math and reading, the achievement gap between Latino and non-Latino students is already significant and unmistakable. This gap is readily admitted by many of the school administrators that we interviewed and over and over we heard from administrators about the need to "start early." By that they meant getting these students into pre-kindergarten programs as early as possible.

Data from the 5th-grade MCA math and

reading tests as well as the 8th-grade Basic Skills Tests suggest that this academic achievement gap does not necessarily narrow over time in most districts. In fact, in many districts this gap actually widens. However, as students enter the higher grades, the consequence of not meeting the basic standards as outlined in the Basic Skills Test becomes clear, as meeting the standard is a component of the state requirements for graduation. As the study documents, the median percentage of Latino students passing the Basic Skills Test is slightly less than 40% for math and 60% for reading. Accordingly, many students likely become disillusioned about the prospects of graduating high school or ever entering a college or university.

We also attempted to better understand grade progression, student retention and student mobility. Here the findings documented grade by grade the progression of students through their high school years and where the "trouble spots" were. Essentially the findings suggest that 10th and 11th grade for Latino students present many barriers, as dropout rates greatly increase in these years. As noted earlier, some suggest that reaching the age where compulsory school attendance is no longer a factor (i.e., age 16) may explain some of this observed behavior. Others might suggest that as Latino students move into the later grades without meeting state graduation requirements (i.e. the Basis Skills Test), some of these students exercise what might seem like a logical option.

The study also documents the very high degree of mobility among Latino students in the high school years. For those who believe that stability highly correlates with academic success, such trends must be quite disconcerting. This is especially true for Latino students in rural school districts where more than 10% and in some districts more than 20% routinely move out of Minnesota and/or out of the United States during the school year. And while many of these students do return, it is not surprising that they struggle academically compared to their classmates who stay in place for the academic year. Interestingly, the study findings suggest that such mobility is primarily an issue for the Latino students in rural Minnesota, where their metro counterparts are more likely to move from one school district to another, but remain in Minnesota.

This mobility is most likely a family issue and an economic issue, as a higher percentage of employment in rural Minnesota is seasonally sensitive. And such issues of mobility were often mentioned by school superintendents, who repeatedly told us that a student's success requires the assistance and commitment of the entire family. In fact, many of the school administrators emphasized their efforts to get the students and their family "connected" to the school as a strategy to increase student retention and academic success.

On the bright side, one cannot overlook the finding that suggests that if a Latino student stays in school and progresses through grade 12, there is a reasonable chance that he or she will achieve a high school diploma. Witness school districts in communities such as Sleepy Eye and Pelican Rapids, where from 2002 to 2005, 94.4% and 80% respectively of Latino 12th graders successfully graduated from their high school. Ideally, such results should not be thought of as anomalies, but rather the norm. Unfortunately, with high rates of mobility, as well as high drop-out rates, far too few Latino students make it to the 12th grade.

Accordingly, that should be our collective goal, and it appears to start through early childhood education. We need to target our efforts to significantly reduce or eliminate the achievement gap as early as possible. Again, this is the message we heard from school administrators over and over again – the earlier the better. The data clearly demonstrates that for most districts, if the gap is significant in grade 3, it is unlikely to narrow in the later grades.

But effective early intervention itself is not enough. We also need to engage families in the effort to ensure their children achieve the educational success they deserve. While the data cannot create a causal link, it is clear that family mobility is problematic, where in some districts

more than 20% of the Latino students leave the state and/or the country during the school year. This is simply not congruent with academic success. Accordingly, school and community leaders need to double their efforts to engage these students' families and help connect them to the community and school resources that will provide a more stable learning environment for these students.

For in the end we all have something to gain as a result. In a world and economy that is increasingly dependent upon knowledge workers, we can no longer afford to let any of our students fail. A community that allows a significant percentage of its future workforce to grow up without any marketable skills is destined collectively to fall short in its other collective efforts as well. What kind of businesses will grow and develop in a community where 20% to 30% of its workforce is essentially unskilled? As our state's minority population continues its rapid growth, the overall consequences of allowing such academic disparities to continue become more obvious and evident to us all.

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