



The State of Latino Education in Mecklenburg County

Second Community Forum

41,000 Hispanic Students in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools

Conclusions from July 11, 2020.

Community leaders shared solutions to the main challenges our public education system is facing in meeting the needs of Hispanic students attending CMS. We addressed parental involvement and community participation. Teachers, counselors, community leaders and college professors discussed Latino student access to higher education.



Conclusions

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The State of the Latino Education in Mecklenburg County Second Community Forum.

Conclusions

1-Students

1.1-Latino Graduation Rates:

In 2012: The graduation rate for Latinos was only 57%, and in 2015 this increased to 79.4% which is a 22% increase.

Currently:

- ❖ CMS Latino parents' commitment and presence in school related activities are very low.
- ❖ CMS is making efforts to invite and involve the Latino community through cultural events, bilingual presentations, communication, increase of bilingual personnel, and bilingual Connect-eds among other tools and processes.

Recommendations:

- ❖ With the help of CMS and community partners, we can continue closing the academic achievement gap.
- ❖ CMS should continue sponsoring projects like GANAS, a mentorship program that pairs volunteers from the community with newly-arrived and/or English-learner students during their senior year.
- ❖ CMS has to find a way to allow integral participation from parents of Latino origin within school district activities while also meeting the federal, state and local expectations in regards to student safety and accountability. This will help Latino parents become active components in their children's education and learning process.

1.2- Pre-K Education:

In 2012: This topic was not included in the 2012 Forum.

Currently:

- ❖ Charlotte recently ranked 50 out of 50 U.S. cities in economic mobility and lack of access to Early Childhood Education programs.
- ❖ Without access to a high-quality preschool education, children enter Kindergarten a year behind, are half as likely to read proficiently in 3rd grade, and are four times as likely to drop out of high school.
- ❖ Last year, only 41% of Hispanic 3rd graders were reading proficiently, compared to 82% of their white peers. Many of these children live in poverty and face additional challenges like limited english proficiency and cultural isolation.

Recommendations:

- ❖ Support for more high-quality, dual language early education programs like Charlotte Bilingual Preschools that are proven effective in bridging the educational gap.
- ❖ Feeder programs for dual language education Pre-K to high school. More dual language teachers and staff.
- ❖ Policies that address the systemic inequities that have created these disparities as well as the redesigning of courses and programs to provide a truly equitable path for success for all.



1.3- Equal Access to College Information:

In 2012: The forum concluded that all students should be provided information about opportunities to attend college or study vocational careers, regardless of immigration status. According to The Pew Hispanic Center in 2012 only 2% of Hispanic students attended college in North Carolina.

Currently:

- ❖ The statewide Latino graduation rate continues to increase.
- ❖ In 2012 the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction registered that 57% of Hispanic students graduated from CMS High Schools and in 2019, the rates increased to 81%.
- ❖ In 2018 college enrollment for Latino students was 7%; the lowest of any ethnic group.

Recommendations:

- ❖ Work with community organizations that specialize in college information, and facilitate their access to students.
- ❖ Increase resources to programs such as Latino YES, a program aimed at showing juniors and seniors their options after high school.
- ❖ By 2025 the graduation rate of Latino students should increase from 81% in 2019 to 95%.
- ❖ By 2025 our goal is to increase college enrollment of Latinos from 7% to 25%.

1.4- Placement Assessment for newcomers / Boot Camp for newcomers:

In 2012: This topic was not included in the 2012 Forum.

Currently:

- ❖ Students are placed in school classrooms based on their age, but the district is not considering the previous knowledge they have before assigning their classes and schedules.
- ❖ Some students are facing several challenges learning the content of subjects like Math, Science, Social Studies and others, not only because of the lack of language, but also because they do not have the previous academic or cultural knowledge needed to succeed.

Recommendations:

- ❖ By 2025 the district will design and implement a mastery exam for Math (and other subjects if needed) to each EL student coming to the district in order to place them properly in their classes; the same way it is done with language proficiency tests.
- ❖ Re-open the Intro to Math class that was available a few years ago. This class will help those students who lack the basic Math skills needed to succeed in this High School level class. This class will give them time to learn more English and bring up their confidence.

2-Parental Involvement

2.1-Reaching Hispanic Parents & Guardians:

In 2012: At the 2012 Forum, it was agreed that the district must take all steps necessary to contact Hispanic parents and guardians of these students to engage them in their student's education. It was also agreed that schools should have a ConnectEd recording in Spanish and that written letters would be sent to the parents and guardians. Additionally, it was also agreed that Hispanic parents and guardians should be supported with phone calls, emails, and/or text messages in Spanish.



Currently:

- ❖ The CMS district office has 9 interpreters, 3 bilingual techs, 2 bilingual counselors, 1 bilingual social worker, the sunset interpreter program, and 4 vendors used for interpreting and translating.

Recommendations:

- ❖ All schools should continue to include translated written communication and follow up with a ConnectEd in Spanish.
- ❖ There should be a more diverse front end staff that better represents the population we serve. There are missed opportunities to get parents involved when staff is not a reflection of the student body.
- ❖ Front end staff should be able to participate in professional development opportunities to learn about our children's cultures and create a welcoming environment.

2.2-Social Security Requirement for Parental Involvement:

In 2012: The Forum 2012 concluded that Hispanic parents were denied access to the schools to participate in their children's school activities due to the requirements of a social security number or state ID to have access to schools' buildings.

Currently:

- ❖ Today undocumented parents are not able to fully participate in their children's school activities because they do not have the documentation required to register in the Lobby Guard System.

Recommendations:

- ❖ Make changes to the Lobby Guard System in order to grant equal access into CMS schools to undocumented parents wanting to get involved in their kids education.
- ❖ Adopt a standard and inclusive policy that allows parents to become active in their kids' education by accepting other means of identification such as foreign passports, national ID cards from their country of origin, consulate letters certifying identity.
- ❖ Invite the community to create an inclusive policy and implement its recommendations

3-Personnel

3.1-Increase Bilingual Personnel:

In 2012: One of the conclusions from the 2012 Education forum was that one of the highest priorities had to be to equip the main offices of those schools with a substantial Hispanic student population with bilingual personnel. In 2013, CMS had 27,807 Hispanic students who comprised 19.45% of the student body.

Currently:

- ❖ CMS has supported and expanded services like the International Center Office, maintained Dual Language schools, and created new ones. Communication with families in both English and Spanish and the hiring of bilingual personnel are among the efforts implemented by the district to meet the need.
- ❖ Today, for the first time Hispanic enrollment has virtually caught up to white enrollment. Each group accounts for just under 27% of the student body. This year CMS tallied 41,000 Hispanic students.
- ❖ CMS continues to have a shortage of Hispanic employees. The Hispanic students represent about 27% of the total student body, while Hispanic employees are only 7.1%. The majority of this 7.1% works in general services, and only a very minimum number represents teachers or administrators.



Recommendations:

- ❖ Despite the district’s efforts to equip schools that have a substantial Hispanic student population with bilingual personnel, there is still a pressing need to continue training, recruiting, and retaining them to bridge the gap between the numbers of Hispanic students and Hispanic employees.
- ❖ Our committee is willing to work, in combination with the district, to increase the current percentage of Hispanic employees from 7.1% to 15%, mainly bilingual Hispanic teachers, by 2025.

3.2-Rewarding Bilingual Staff:

In 2012: The forum 2012 expressed the need to reward bilingual staff. Employees fluent in a language different from English, who use these language skills as part of their job duties, should be economically rewarded.

Currently:

- ❖ Bilingual employees in other government agencies receive a monetary compensation determined by language proficiency, use of the language for official duties, and the achievement of high marks on a language proficiency assessment administered by an outside institution.
- ❖ Local government agencies provide interpretation services to their clients utilizing full time bilingual staff and interpreters.
- ❖ At these agencies, this additional work responsibility is voluntary and bilingual employees are not allowed to serve as interpreters until after approving the language proficiency test administered by the outside agency.

Recommendations:

- ❖ Create a compensation system to reward full time bilingual personnel, depending on their language proficiency and amount of time they dedicate to the interpretation/translation duty.

3.3-Value Effective International Faculty:

In 2012: This topic was not included in the 2012 Forum.

Currently:

- ❖ CMS trains the international teachers and Texas and Colorado enjoy the benefit of trained and experienced educators. Most of the best teachers who finish their 5-year exchange program are massively hired in states like Texas and Colorado, through a H1B visa sponsorship process.
- ❖ CMS is making great efforts to keep international teachers that are leaders in the classroom and enrich the curriculum in our district by beginning a sponsorship process.

Recommendations:

- ❖ Development of a transparent sponsorship process available to all schools.
- ❖ Create a merit system to retain international educators that show interest in pursuing a long-term career within our district. Support international faculty who express a serious desire to further their education enrolling in master degrees, doctorates, and National Board Teaching Certification, and are willing to remain committed to our district serving the school community.



3.4-Challenges of Latino Administrators in CMS:

In 2012: This topic was not included in the 2012 Forum.

Currently:

- ❖ There is a notorious lack of Latino representation among CMS administration.
- ❖ There is a CMS Pipeline Program to increase the preparation and participation of Hispanic administrators in the district.

Recommendations:

- ❖ Implement a more user-friendly search engine that places the information about administrative positions/opportunities for professionals who are qualified and interested in becoming CMS administrators.
- ❖ Promote the CMS Pipeline programs quarterly in different locations throughout the school system.
- ❖ Offer scholarships to increase the number of participants in the CMS Pipeline programs.

4-Inclusive Culture, Equity

4.1-Hispanic Heritage Month:

In 2012: The Forum 2012 concluded that the district should promote and celebrate the Hispanic Heritage Month at all the schools.

Currently:

- ❖ There are scarce celebrations to honor Hispanic Heritage across the school system.
- ❖ It is imperative that CMS Central Office encourages this annual observation with appropriate ceremonies and activities such as the Hispanic Heritage Month.
- ❖ The commemoration has been an initiative of individual teachers.
- ❖ The Group of Latino Employees in CMS (GOLES) promoted the celebration in 2019.

Recommendations:

- ❖ With 41000 Hispanic students in CMS, it is essential that the Board of Education and the district Superintendent proclaim Hispanic Heritage Month. As a result, administrators and teachers should put together a program to celebrate this important time for the Hispanic community. The program should include a classroom level review of Hispanic literature, music, art, customs, history, and food and additionally, include in the program other communities at large events with the presence of Hispanic community leaders and professionals.

4.2-Cultural Awareness:

In 2012: This topic was not included in the 2012 Forum.

Currently:

- ❖ Out of 18,802 employees in the district, 1,332 self identified as Latinos. Out of 146,000 students, 41,000 self identified as Latinos. There is a 19% gap and to have equitable representation the district needs to hire 2,278 new latino employees.



Recommendations:

- ❖ Recruiting, hiring, sponsoring and retaining Latino professionals to perform mainly administrative, pedagogical, and counseling tasks.
- ❖ Developing effective national strategies to attract highly qualified Latino professionals through diverse platforms visible to the national Hispanic population.
- ❖ Expand the search for new personnel, creating a collaborative system in which colleges from other states promote programs like the teachers and administrative pipeline in order to match the personnel demand.

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