

## Education

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Education

## No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

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ASPIRA supports the basic tenets of higher standards for all students, school accountability and assessments. ASPIRA's main concerns are that:

- the serious under-funding for No Child Left Behind (NCLB), especially of Title I students and parents and low-income communities, imposes a higher bar for students and schools to reach without the means for students and schools to achieve at high levels;
- because of the lack of resources, such as highly prepared/experienced teachers and educational resources, schools that Latino children attend are often ranked as "failing" and hence will lose further funding;
- students will be penalized (sanctions on schools, such as loss of funding) for the low performance of their schools because of arbitrary and overly ambitious achievement targets;
- lack of research on the impact and consequences of NCLB measures results in high stakes decisions made without sufficient evidence;
- the class size in schools attended by Latino students may be too high and not conducive to high achievement levels;
- imposing NCLB on high schools is detrimental without adequate funding and without sufficient time to assess the impact on elementary and middle school students;
- standardized tests may not be properly and continuously monitored to ensure that they reflect the standards, that other measures of student performance should be considered (multiple indicators), and that assessment results should be used for improvement and not to penalize schools/students;
- care may not be taken in adequately assessing LEP students and that LEP students scores may be used improperly to determine student progress;
- parents and communities are not being adequately informed on progress of their children or of the school, and of their right to transfer their children to another school or their right to receive supplemental education services.

## School Financing

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ASPIRA supports equitable financing of schools. The disparities in school financing, resulting from the use of property taxes to fund schools, creates enormous disparities in funding between school districts even within the same state. With this financing formula, students in low income areas will have fewer resources than students in more affluent areas.

ASPIRA supports remedies, such as Abbott in New Jersey, to equalize school funding.

## Teachers

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ASPIRA supports programs and efforts at all levels that:

- increase the number of highly qualified and experienced teachers in schools with large numbers of Latino students;
- target Latinos in college to encourage them to become teachers;
- provide on-going, quality professional development for teachers;
- provide teachers of Latino students with professional development so they can better address the needs of these students;
- provide incentives to highly qualified/experienced teachers to teach in low-income community schools;
- increase the number and quality of bilingual education teachers;
- increase teacher compensation to attract highly qualified people to the profession.

## Drop Out Prevention

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ASPIRA supports continued adequate and appropriate funding of current programs that exist to encourage students to complete their high school education, such as the drop out prevention demonstration program.

## Charter Schools

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ASPIRA supports the charter school movement, especially in districts in which significant numbers of Latino students are failing.

ASPIRA supports

- limiting the numbers of charter schools in districts, so the charter schools do not undermine the public school system;
- ensuring that school districts cover the real cost of students in charter schools, especially the cost of physical facilities;
- Developing research-based academic programs in its charter schools, including such areas as math, reading, science, and technology;
- Using charter schools as models to improve education in the public schools;
- Ensuring that charter schools address academic and personal needs of students.

## Students with Disabilities

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IDEA is seriously under-funded.

ASPIRA supports efforts such as the Hagel-Harkin plan to allocate the funds necessary so that IDEA will eventually be fully funded

ASPIRA supports efforts to better inform parents of their rights under IDEA and that schools implement programs that are effective in dealing with students with disabilities.

ASPIRA supports greater use of technology in addressing the educational needs of students with disabilities.

## Head Start

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As one of the most successful federal education and nutrition programs, ASPIRA supports efforts to increase funding for head start so that it can serve 100% of the students who qualify for the program (currently 60%).

## Vocational Education

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ASPIRA supports adequate vocational education funding and expansion, especially for professional training in areas with promising future potential for employment, such as in allied health and technology fields.

## Community / Parental Engagement

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ASPIRA supports efforts to prepare and involve parents in the education of their children, in schools and in promoting education reform. ASPIRA supports the parent engagement programs and requirements under NCLB, as well as private efforts such as ASPIRA's APEX and similar quality programs.

ASPIRA supports efforts, programs and organizations that promote community and parent advocacy for improving schools, such as training and information for parents in their native language on

- how their school system works and its connection to the larger democratic landscape, e.g. voting for their school board and accountability;
- appropriate avenues for parental participation and involvement decision-making bodies of their schools;

- the background and implication of laws on their children's education, e.g. interaction of NCLB and their rights under the law.

## After-School Programs

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ASPIRA supports structured, high quality after-school programs that provide a mix of academic enrichment, counseling, academic help, personal development and a safe, drug and violence-free environment.

ASPIRA supports programs that promote positive youth development, such as the ASPIRA Process.

## Bilingual Education / LEP Students

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ASPIRA supports the notion that all students must learn English to succeed in the United States and the global economy, but endorses a bilingual approach to language education as an appropriate transition to English proficiency. This approach ensures that a child maintains grade level academic standing in all subjects and retains quality ability in their native language.

ASPIRA supports

- 'transitional' and dual Spanish language programs rather than 'immersion;'
- quality bilingual education for every child that needs bilingual education;
- increased funding for bilingual education programs where needed;
- programs that support the professional development and recruitment of bilingual teachers to ensure a quality bilingual education teacher force.

## Educational Research

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ASPIRA supports efforts to increase funding for research that analyzes the success of

- transition programs that serve to integrate Latino students into public education;
- educational pipeline programs that ensure equity and opportunity in entering post-secondary education institutions;
- Latino English Language Learners;
- programs that use of technology to increase educational achievement;
- after school programs;
- diverse methods of teaching;
- drop out prevention programs;
- student leadership development approaches to promoting school success (ASPIRA's Model);
- early college awareness programs.

## Access to Postsecondary Education And Financial Aid

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As a leader in education of Hispanic youth, ASPIRA has created a leadership development model for communities and groups to increase Latino representation in higher education. This model also includes intervention programs, especially in mathematics and science-based careers, as well as TRIO programs, such as Upward Bound and Talent Search.

To support college aspirations of Latino youth, ASPIRA supports

- increases in Pell Grants and other federal financial assistance to allow more Latino youth to afford college;
- college-based affirmative action programs that actively seek out Latino students to attend college;
- the Dream Act that would allow over 60,000 undocumented high school graduates to attend college and seek a pathway to legalization.

ASPIRA strongly opposes imposing a higher loan burden on Latino families so their children can attend college.

## Higher Education

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ASPIRA supports pipeline and transition programs, especially

- efforts and programs to ensure students remain in college, in particular continuity of financial aid and college-level intervention programs such as TRIO's Student Services program;
- programs that encourage, prepare and provide financial assistance to Latino students interested in pursuing graduate studies.

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