Policy Options for Addressing Inequity in Education for Latino/a Students in the U.S. Context

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March 9, 2014

The "achievement gap," refers to the disparity in academic performance between children born to low-income, minority families with multiple risk factors for academic failure and children from more advantaged backgrounds. Studies have shown that the achievement gap widens as children move through the grade levels (Nelson, 2006). This white paper focuses specifically on the problem of inequity (especially regarding the achievement gap) in U.S. education for Latino/a students and policy options for making education more equitable and accessible. It's important to note that equity isn't about *sameness*; for the purpose of this analysis, equity is defined as fairness, which entails, "making sure that personal and social circumstances are not obstacles to achieving education potential…this implies that specific instances of disadvantage will be addressed and overcome" (PPIACU, 2011).

Prevalence, Population, and Consequences

The 2010 U.S. Census reported that the Latino/a population constituted 16% of the general population, with 50.5 million individuals reporting Hispanic or Latino origin. Between 2000 and 2010, the Latino/a population increased by 15.2 million or 43% (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2011). This population is expected to reach 132.8 million by 2050, which is 30.25% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). This growing population means more Latino/a students in U.S. schools; Latino/a enrollment in public schools has tripled since 1968 (Clayton, 2011). The majority of these students are also English-language learners (ELLs), and according to the Department of Education (2012), the growth over the past decade for both Latino/as and ELLs has outpaced the general population growth and the growth in school-age children.

Despite increasing attention by educators and the media, data from the most recent National Assessment of Educational Programs (NAEP, 2011) demonstrates that the achievement gap between Euro-American students and Latino/a students has increased in the last decade, with Latino/a students scoring consistently lower on math and reading tests than Euro-American students, especially in large cities (NCES, 2002). In addition, recent estimates indicate that as many as 40% of Latino/a students do not complete high school (NAEP, 2011; Greene & Forster, 2003). In California and Texas, the states with the largest Latino populations, only 55% and 56%, (respectively), of Latino students graduate from high school (Greene, 2001). These negative educational outcomes are not only characteristic of first generation Latino/a immigrants; to the contrary, second- and third-generation Latino/a students in the U.S. perform at lower levels than recent immigrants.

Socioeconomic status has also been found to be related to issues of equity for the education of Latino/a students. In 2007, 27% of Hispanic children were living in poverty compared with 10% of White children (NCELA, 2007). Studies have repeatedly found that socioeconomic status (SES) impacts student outcomes (e.g., Baharudin & Luster, 1998; Jeynes, 2002; Eamon, 2005), and according to Cummins (2001), "underachievement is concentrated among students who grow up in impoverished conditions and among groups such as African American, Latino/a, and Native American Students" (p. 651). Research has suggested that students who have a low SES earn lower test scores and are more likely to drop out of school (Eamon, 2005; Hochschild, 2003). The impact

of SES on school performance is so significant that it has been shown to supersede the influence of other variables that predict academic outcomes such as parental involvement and social support (McNeal, 2001).

While individual socioeconomic status can greatly impact school experiences of Latino/a youth, it is also important to consider school-level poverty when designing and implementing interventions. This issue is especially important when considering that research has suggested that school-level poverty has more of an effect on student performance than racial composition (e.g. Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). In the U.S., Latino/a students are often enrolled in segregated, high-poverty schools that have limited human and material/fiscal resources (Clayton, 2011; Orfield & Lee, 2004). In addition, these schools tend to have high teacher-turnover rates and have difficulty training their teachers, despite the higher-than average need of students in these schools (Ingersoll, 2003; Mayer, 2002), especially in terms of early literacy and special education needs (Clayton, 2011). When teacher quality is assessed (in terms of the quality of coursework, years of experience, licensure, degrees attained, and test scores), teachers in schools serving high minority populations fall short of required standards on average (Clayton, 2011; Haycock & Crawford, 2008). These teachers also tend to report less favorable working conditions than their counterparts in low-poverty, low-minority schools, based on the level of student preparedness, school resources, student absenteeism, and student discipline (Clayton, 2011).

In addition, according to a report made by Young and colleagues (2012) for Educational Testing Services (ETS), "at the elementary grade levels (K–5), educational inequality results from both between-school segregation (a disproportionate representation of one racial/ethnic group in one school or district over another) and within-school segregation through tracking that limits students' access to challenging curriculum." Although empowerment/disempowerment outcomes for students are rooted in the power dynamics and discrimination inherent in institutions and the larger society, many educators believe that schools provide equal opportunities for success and as a result individuals are responsible for their own failure. This perception is often held by the students themselves, who are made to feel that their failure is due to their own inferiority (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1984).

Overall, however, "gaps in high school completion rates between Latinos and other groups remain even after controlling for the students' social class background, language proficiency, and immigrant status" (Young, Lakin, Courtney, & Martiniello, 2012, p. 2). These gaps in achievement represent an established, institutionalized trend in the U.S. education system that if allowed to continue, will disempower and abandon generations of youth based on their status as ethnic minorities. This institutionalized discrimination sends the socially unjust message that the American dream is only within reach for our non-minority citizens. As immigration continues and our communities become more ethnically diverse, it is clear that these issues can no longer be ignored. Therefore, policy interventions are needed to combat this issue and to assure educational equality for *all* young people, regardless of culture or ethnicity.

Previous/Existing Policy and What Works

First and foremost, it is clear that maintaining the status quo is not an option, as the achievement gap between Latino and Euro-American students continues to widen despite several national education policy interventions (NAEP, 2011). Second then, it is important to briefly address what these policy interventions entail and why they have not been successful in achieving equity in the

American education system. The two policies that will be addressed here are No Child Left Behind (NCLB), administered under President George W. Bush, and Race to the Top (RTTT), implemented by the Obama administration.

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L.107-110) established an accountability system for states, school districts, and schools receiving federal education funds. It requires states and local districts to (1) have academic standards, (2) make annual progress towards having every student achieve the standards and closing gaps between all students and certain subgroups of students, (3) test students to see if they are learning, and (4) collect data on how they are doing. The law also requires states to identify schools and school districts that are not making enough progress and follow a step-by-step process for either turning those schools around or closing them. The law makes its academic standards and assessment requirements a condition of receiving a federal Title I grant. Title I grants go through states to local school districts to help educate disadvantaged children. Title I is the largest federal education grant to states and local school districts. These requirements mandate that each state adopt challenging content and achievement standards in math, reading or language arts, and science to be used to carry out the law's assessment and school improvement requirements. States must apply the same standards to all schools and children in the state. Content standards must (1) specify what children are expected to know and be able to do, (2) have rigorous and coherent content, and (3) encourage teaching of advanced skills. Achievement standards must be aligned with state content standards and have three levels of achievement – basic, proficient, and advanced (summarized in Lohman, 2010).

There are many critics of NCLB, specifically in reference to the policy's failure of addressing and improving equity in U.S. schools (not to mention the myriad of other criticisms not related to equity specifically). The Bush administration claimed that NCLB addresses equity and the achievement gap by holding schools accountable for serving all students. Specifically, the claim was that the accountability measures and testing required by NCLB would highlight achievement gaps in schools and force schools to address inequity in order to meet NCLB standards. Critics, like writers at the magazine *Rethinking Schools,* however, countered these claims by highlighting flaws in the policy that actually work against equity in schools:

> The Bush plan uses achievement gaps to label schools as "failures," but does not provide the resources or support needed to eliminate them. The law includes an unrealistic and under-funded federal mandate that by 2014, 100 percent of all students…must be proficient on state tests. Schools that don't reach increasingly difficult test score targets face an escalating series of sanctions. Instead of an appropriate educational strategy, this is part of a calculated political campaign to leave schools and children behind as the federal government retreats from the nation's historic commitment to improving universal public schooling for all kids (Karp, 2003).

The policy is also criticized for the way it deals with students with limited English-language proficiency (which is especially relevant for Latino/a students). Under NCLB, these students (along with special needs students) are included in testing calculations, despite the fact that these test-takers are held accountable for results of tests that they don't understand and are in many cases doomed to fail. This also makes it harder to reach the largely deemed unreasonable "adequate yearly progress" targets, while doing nothing to improve educational services to these

children (Karp, 2003). Other critics pointed out that NCLB actually impairs schools' ability to address equity for students with limited English language proficiency by greatly restricting the use of effective bilingual education programs and promoting "English only" intolerance and discrimination.

Race to the Top

As part of ARRA, also known as the "federal stimulus" act, Congress provided $4.35 billion for competitive grants to states to encourage education innovation and reform in four areas: (1) enhancing standards and assessments, (2) improving collection and use of data, (3) increasing teacher effectiveness and achieving equity in teacher distribution, and (4) turning around low-achieving schools. The RTTT scoring rubric awards states that apply for a grant a maximum of 500 points based on how well they meet the grant's various criteria. Points are awarded in six areas with many subareas. Winning states must use the grant money to implement the programs and plans detailed in their grant applications. In terms of standards and assessment, RTTT requires a state that receives a grant to promise to adopt and use common K-12 standards for what students know and are able to do. These standards must be developed in a consortium with several other states and be internationally benchmarked. States must also commit to increasing the quality of their assessments and, with other states, implement common assessments. States receive higher scores for being part of a consortium with a significant number of other states (summerized in Lohman, 2010).

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE, 2014a) has awarded Race to the Top grants in three phases. Phase 1 applications were due January 19, 2010 and awards were issued on March 29, 2010. Forty-one states applied for grants in the first round. There were 15 finalists and two winners, Delaware and Tennessee, which received grants of $100 million and $500 million, respectively. Phase 2 applications were due June 1, 2010 and winners were announced on August 24, 2010, and included Washington D. C., Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Rhode Island (with award amounts ranging from ($75 million to $700 million, depending on the size of the state. Phase 3 winners—Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania—were announced on December 23, 2011.

Although many educators were optimistic about the shift from mandated change (under NCLB) to incentivized change, those interested in promoting equity have been disappointed by the policy's ability to generate improvements on that front (e.g., Strauss, 2014). The Obama administration even acknowledged that the policy has not generated the expected gains in educational equity since 2010, so in his recently released budget proposal for the 2015 fiscal year, President Obama proposed $300 million for the "Race to the Top-Equity and Opportunity" program. According to the USDOE (2014b), this policy would…

> Create incentives for states and school districts to drive comprehensive change in how states and districts identify and close opportunity and achievement gaps. Grantees would enhance data systems to sharpen the focus on the greatest disparities and invest in strong teachers and leaders in high-need schools. Grants would also support other strategies that mitigate the effects of concentrated poverty, such as expanded learning time, access to rigorous coursework, and comprehensive student supports. An underlying goal is to measure the success of these strategies and use the results to support continuous program improvement.

There are critics of this proposal as well, who believe that it is basically the same policy (a $300 million contest) with a new name (Strauss, 2014). Others, like Noelle Ellerson, speaking for The School Superintendents Association, "question the sincerity behind a call for equity when, by construction, the program creates a system of winners and losers." It is also still unclear if Congress will support this proposal (Strauss, 2014).

What Works

According to the Public Policy Institute of Australian Catholic University (2011) in an issues paper prepared for the Independent Schools Council of Australia, "the evidence shows that the investments that make the most difference to quality outcomes also make the greatest contribution to achieving equity." The investments that have been shown to raise quality and equity simultaneously include:

- ***Early intervention*** (priority to investment in quality early years education and care)
- ***Teacher quality*** (the most significant in-school factor influencing students' performance);
- ***School-related factors*** (e.g., the learning environment, leadership, focus on achievement);
- ***System-related factors*** such as accountability (performance assessment and publication of information), autonomy (flexibility in staffing and in the capacity to respond to students' needs), and choice (the incentive to meet parental expectations, in terms of performance and broader outcomes of schooling);
- ***Educational strategies*** targeted at particular needs, based on evidence about what works for particular students in particular contexts.
  [Also see Cunha & Heckman, 2006; Hattie, 2003; Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, 2010].

Therefore, in creating policy to address equity in education for Latino/a youth, all of these factors must be targeted and integrated into policy in order to increase the likelihood of success.

Policy Options for Addressing Inequality in Education

Three evaluative criteria will be used to assess the feasibility of the policy options presented below. These criteria include how well they incorporate the investments shown to work in promoting equity; efficiency; and political feasibility.

1) Nation-Wide Universal Pre-Kindergarten

Studies have shown that the achievement gap widens between disadvantaged and advantaged children as they move through the grade levels. Many policymakers have considered early education initiatives as a strategy to increase school readiness or as mechanism for closing the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students and those of high and low socioeconomic status (Lynch, 2004; Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003). There is strong rationale for this focus on school readiness and social justice. First, a substantial body of research demonstrates that children's experiences –even before they enter kindergarten –influence their long-term cognitive and social development (e.g., Christie & Enz, 1992; Howse, Calkins, Anastopoulos, Keane & Shelton, 2003; MacEwan, 2013; Shields, Dickstein, Seifer, Giusti, Dodge Magee & Spritz, 2001; Starkey & Klein, 2000). According to Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development (2000), "From birth to age 5, children rapidly develop foundational capabilities on

which subsequent development builds. In addition to their remarkable linguistic and cognitive gains, they exhibit dramatic progress in their emotional, social, regulatory, and moral capacities" (p. 5). The report goes on to say that these components of early development are interconnected and deserving of attention.

Second, early disadvantage, without intervention, has also been shown to lead to academic and social difficulties later in life (Carneiro, Cunha & Heckman, 2006). Both advantages and disadvantages accumulate over time, so it makes sense to provide young children with every opportunity to begin life with advantages, such as those gained from early education. Research strongly indicates that children from low-income and/or minority families benefit substantially, both cognitively and socially/behaviorally, from high quality early childhood education, thus helping to close the achievement and opportunity gap between certain groups in our society. In this way, investments in early education can be seen as movement toward greater social justice and equality (e.g., Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Davis, 2003; Heckman, 2006; MacEwan, 2013; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005). While the goal of universal availability of early childhood education is often recognized for these reasons, in the United States less than half of three- and four-year-olds were enrolled in preschool programs in the 2008-2010 period (MacEwan, 2013).

Research based studies (e.g., the Perry Preschool Project, Schweinhart, et al., 2005) that show significant positive outcomes for children who attend preschool, especially children who are "at risk." The term universal pre-K means that pre-K programs are available to any child in a given state, regardless of family income, children's abilities, or other factors. High-quality universal preschool is widely available in other industrialized countries, such as Denmark, France, Norway, and Sweden. Universal preschool is not new to the U.S. context, either. Since 1998, Oklahoma has offered universal access to pre-kindergarten and has one of the highest participation rates in the country, with 74 percent of all 4-year-olds enrolled in a pre-K program. Oklahoma's 1998 law gave more funding to schools that enrolled 4-year-olds and allowed school districts to collaborate with federally-funded Head Start programs, churches and other outside organizations to share resources. The law also created stringent standards for the classroom: All pre-K teachers had to have a college degree and a certificate in early-childhood education, and they were paid the same wage as K-12 teachers. The student-teacher ratio had to be at least 10-1, and class sizes were limited to 20. Researchers from Georgetown University studied Oklahoma's universal pre-K program and found significant benefits for children from both low-income and middle-income homes, and average gains of 54% in cognitive and language assessment scores for Latino/a youth (the largest gains of all ethnic groups; Gormley, Phillips, & Gayer, 2008).

What's Been Shown to Work

- ***Early intervention***: Universal preschool policy meets this criterion explicitly.
- ***Teacher quality***: Model programs (which should be used as a template for implementing new preschool programs) put teacher quality at the forefront. The minimum qualifications for teachers used in model programs are a bachelor's degree and certification in early childhood education.
- ***School-related factors***: The quality of the learning environment, leadership, and a focus on achievement can and should be addressed by policy mechanisms tied to funding, including provisions for minimum class size. Preschools that are not meeting the minimum standards for these school-related factors should be given a probationary period before any action is taken.

- ***System-related factors:*** Accountability (performance assessment and publication of information), autonomy (flexibility in staffing and in the capacity to respond to students' needs), and choice (the incentive to meet parental expectations, in terms of performance and broader outcomes of schooling) can all be easily integrated into this policy option.
- ***Educational strategies***: Model programs design curriculum based on well-researched best practices for early childhood education and development. An example curriculum from the Berry College Child Development Center that could be used in implementation focuses on developmental indicators, including those related to physical development (e.g., motor activity, muscle growth, fine motor skills), intellectual development (e.g., self-discovery, attention span, concentration, listening skills, language expression), social development (functioning in a group, recognizing the rights of others, kindness, cooperation, helpfulness), emotional development (e.g., acceptable ways of expressing feelings, sense of security), nutrition (e.g., Child and Adult Care Food Program), and creative development (e.g., expression through music, art, and play).

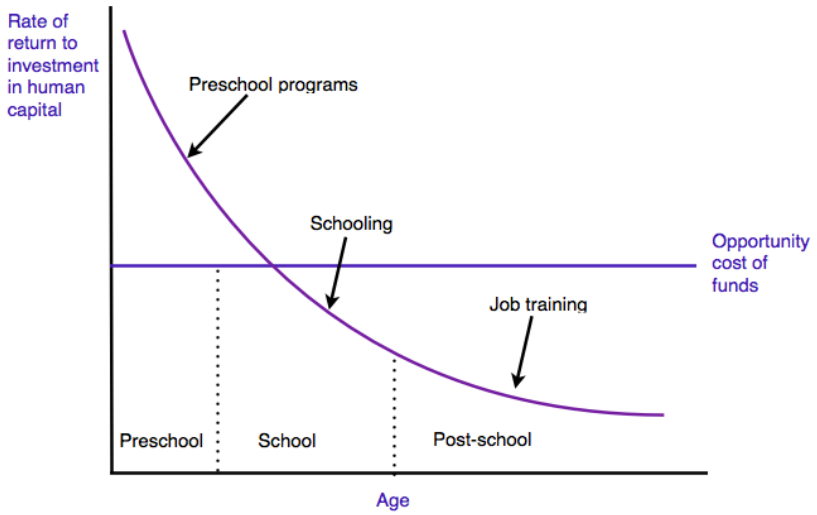
Efficiency

According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2006), "early intervention is the most cost-effective approach to closing the achievement gap." Beyond readiness and social justice justifications for early education, new research and analysis from economic experts has generated an additional reason for these investments: mounting evidence shows that investments in early education may be considered as an economic development strategy (Heckman & Masterov, 2004; Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003). This approach is rare, but is gaining momentum. According to economists Rolnick and Grunewald (2003), "Early childhood development programs are rarely portrayed as economic development initiatives, and we think that is a mistake. Such programs, if they appear at all, are at the bottom of the economic development lists for state and local governments. They should be at the top." Nobel Prize winner James Heckman's 2007 report, entitled *The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children* outlines the ways in which individual economic stability and productivity can be fostered by investments in young children, especially children living in poverty or other adverse circumstances whose environments put them at risk for economic and social failure from birth. First, the abilities that are fostered in early education programs (both cognitive and non-cognitive) are important for a productive workforce. Because these skills accumulate over time (Sawhill, Tebbs, & Dickens, 2006), investing in young children is an investment in future productivity. Students who complete early education programs will enter the workforce as more prepared and productive workers (Heckman & Masterov, 2007). They will also be more likely to graduate from high school, thus earning them as much as 15% in additional wages (Lindahl & Canton, 2007). Second, research has shown that a primary factor accounting for the variation in children's academic performance in U.S. schools is the variation in parental environments (Coleman, 1966; Heckman & Masterov, 2007). Research has shown that early education and other early interventions (such as home visits) can mitigate the effects of poor family environments (Heckman & Masterov, 2007). Key workforce skills such as motivation, persistence and self-control are developed early, and if families cannot work with young children on these skills, they will be more difficult to gain later in life (Coleman, 1966).

Other research has noted that not only does early childhood education foster individual productivity, but that it also generates economic gains for the parents of children. These short-term impacts include increased parental incomes, as more parents are able to enter the paid work

force, and increased productivity on the part of parents when their children are enrolled in high quality early education programs (MacEwan, 2013). First, numerous studies have shown an impact of childcare availability on labor force participation rates, especially for mothers (e.g., Connelly, 1992; Lefebvre & Merrigan, 2005; Müller Kucera & Bauer, 2006; Stolzenberg & Waite, 1984). For example, in a study of a low-cost, universal child care program in the Province of Quebec, Lefebvre and Merrigan (2005) found, "... the effect of the policy to be 7.6 percentage points for labor force participation. Since the participation rate in Québec for 2002 is 69%, we estimate that it would have been 61.4% without the policy. Hence the policy increased participation by 12.3%" (p. 251). Another study in Zurich, Switzerland found a much larger impact, namely that the rate of hours worked by mothers almost doubled after quality childcare was made available (Müller Kucera & Bauer, 2006).

Early childhood education is also economically advantageous for society as a whole (Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Rolnick and Grunewald, 2003; see Figure). For example, a study by Rolnick and Grunewald (2003) found that the average return on investment for early education programs is 16 percent, with 80 percent of the benefits going to the general public. High-quality "model" programs yield $8 for every dollar invested (Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003). Furthermore, a policy brief prepared by budget specialist Isabel Sawhill and colleagues (2006) for the Brookings Institution concluded that a high quality universal preschool policy could add $2 trillion to annual U.S. GDP by 2080. By 2080, a national program would cost the federal government approximately $59 billion, but "generate enough additional growth in federal revenue to cover the costs of the program several times over" (Sawhill, Tebbes, & Dickens, 2006, p. 1). Additional savings come from the widespread finding that early education (and education in general) result in less engagement in the criminal justice system (Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Lochner & Moretti, 2004). This means less social and financial burden on citizens and governments, as students who complete early education programs are less likely to commit crimes later in life. Students who complete early education programs, because they are more likely to find employment later in life, will also be less reliant on social services (MacEwan, 2013). Even within school systems, early education can lead to savings, as it lowers incidences of special education and grade retention (MacEwan, 2013), which are especially common experiences for minority students (Toney & Rodgers, 2011).



Source: Created based on findings from Heckman & Masterov, 2007

Therefore, investments in high quality education (especially early education) should be understood and studied not only in terms of individual achievement or social equity, but also as a viable economic development strategy. Although the costs of implementing universal preschool nation-wide are high, the evidence suggests that the benefits to individuals and society greatly outweigh the costs, and that many of the investments will be returned overtime, which is something that cannot be said for much of national policy.

Political Feasibility

Universal preschool policies, like the one in implemented in Oklahoma, are currently being discussed by or have been implemented in other states (like Georgia, Tennessee), as well as cities (such as Los Angeles, New York City, and Seattle). In his February 2013 State of the Union Address, President Obama called for high quality preschool for every child in the United States. Specifically, the White House has said that, "we know from decades of research that high-quality early learning can significantly improve long-term educational and life outcomes, especially for children from low-income families" (USDOE, 2014B). In budget proposal for 2015, the USDOE states that, "President Obama has committed to a historic new investment in preschool education that supports universal access to high-quality preschool for all 4-year olds from low- and moderate-income families and creates an incentive for states to serve additional middle-class children." The President's budget request includes $1.3 billion in 2015 and $75 billion over 10 years in mandatory funding, along with $500 million for competitively awarded Preschool Development Grants and other funds. States would have to hire qualified teachers and meet certain benchmarks to get the funding, and they would have to meet curriculum standards and keep class sizes small (Deruy, 2013).

The support that these calls for early education have generated (especially from educators) has been strong, and many educators say that the time is right for a federal mandate for universal early education (not just a plea from the President for states to get on-board) (Deruy, 2013). That isn't to say that there hasn't been criticism; a statement on the Cato Institute website (the institute is a think tank that advocates for limited government), alleges that any early childhood education benefits of preschool to low-income kids have been "few and fleeting," and that "public preschool for younger children is irresponsible, given the failure of the public school system to educate the children currently enrolled…The desire to 'do something' for young children should be tempered by the facts, and proposals for universal preschool should be rejected." However, the evidence does suggest that the benefits are not "few and fleeting." Wider dissemination of the benefits of early education (particularly the economic benefits, which may appeal more to lawmakers), and the success of universal preschool policy in contexts like Oklahoma, may help to sway the opposition and generate additional political support for federally-mandated and supported early education.

2) Mandate equity standards and accountability measures at the institutional level

This policy option focuses on the federal government (through the USDOE) holding schools accountable for equitable practices through adopting equity standards that help create, prioritize, and reward a school culture that supports achievement for all students. According to an Organizing Apprenticeship policy brief (Toney & Rodgers, 2011), "the impact of only looking at assessments is that students of color are often viewed as unable to achieve. This is not the case. And, schools miss opportunities to track larger institutional factors that contribute to gaps. The

needed standards must measure, reward, and hold schools accountable for equitably educating our students of color and low-income students who are too often marginalized in our education system."

Emerging equity standards in the literature (e.g., Toney & Rodgers, 2011) include but are not limited to: equitable treatment and access for all students; parent and community involvement from all cultures, races and linguistic backgrounds; proportional graduation and drop-out rates; equal representation of all cultures throughout curriculums; the absence of tracking and unequal discipline rates; and clear pathways to post-secondary education for all students. In formalizing this policy, teachers, researchers, policy makers and government would need to select and operationally define those standards that have the greatest likelihood of improving equity at the institutional level.

If this policy is implemented, it must also address the question of what happens when schools are not meeting the mandated equity standards. One option is to continue in the vein of NCLB and impose sanctions on schools that are not meeting the equity standards (i.e., discontinuation of funding through Title I). A more positive, less punitive approach would be to provide 3-years of partial funding and resources (e.g., consulting expertise, workshops, additional staff member to promote equity and/or act as family-community liaison, additional administrator to work directly in promoting equity in the school, freedom for re-districting) for schools to actively work toward meeting the equity standards.

What's Been Shown to Work

- ***Early intervention***: This policy does not directly address early intervention (e.g., pre-K), but equity standards implemented for K-12 schools could help address equity for students beginning at age 4.
- ***Teacher quality***: This policy does not directly address teacher quality, but it is sufficiently likely that as teachers and administrators work toward improving the equity standards of the school, teacher quality will also improve (Toney & Rodgers, 2011).
- ***School-related factors***: This policy is directly aimed at improving the learning environment, leadership, and focus on achievement for all students.
- ***System-related factors***: This policy option promotes system-related factors such as accountability to all students, autonomy (teachers and administrators can develop their own strategies for meeting equity standards), and choice (parents will know more about the equity outcomes of their child(ren)'s school and can chose to be involved in improving outcomes or move their child(ren) to a different school if the equity environment does not meet their expectations.
- ***Educational strategies***: Equity standards have not been empirically tested to see if they can be targeted at particular needs, based on evidence about what works for particular students in particular contexts.

Efficiency

As this policy has not been empirically tested on a smaller scale (unlike the universal prekindergarten), there is no clear data on the estimated costs of this policy. However, it is still vital to speculate what specific costs this policy would require in order to be implemented. The most significant costs of this program would include:

1) The development, distribution, and analysis of assessment materials.
2) Resources for the 3-year period given to schools that are not meeting equity standards (if using the less punitive approach), including but not limited to funds for outside consulting, workshops/training exercises, curriculum development, and the hiring of new staff, teachers, and administrators.

The expected benefits of this program include greater social justice and a reduction in the "educational gap" for Latino/a students (and other traditionally marginalized populations), as well as increased economic productivity (as students are better educated and are then more able to secure employment) and returns to society, largely through reductions in spending on the criminal justice system (as higher levels of education have been shown to be related to less engagement with the criminal justice system).

President Obama is willing to spend $300 million for the proposed "Race to the Top-Equity and Opportunity" (RTTT-EO) program. This policy option could be implemented along with the President's proposed program as a category for funding, or it could be implemented instead of RTTT-EO. If this policy took the place of RTTT-EO, it is reasonable to assume the proposal (since it is addressing the same problem) would be supported for up to the same price ($300 million). The bulk of those funds should go to supporting those schools that do not meet equity standards. For the price of $300 million, there should be an expected 50% decrease in the "educational gap" (assessed through standard assessments) over 10 years to justify the costs of the policy.

Political Feasibility

Under the leadership of President Obama, there has been more widespread acknowledgement of the inequity that exists in the U.S. education system, and the proposed federal budget for 2015 highlights the need for programs such as this. There is also likely to be political support for this policy proposal (perhaps above and beyond the other two options) because there is a long-standing precedent for improving educational outcomes through the implementation of accountability measures and standards of excellence, which are then tied to federal funding. There may be critics, however, for the same reason; namely, that this policy continues "business as usual" and only changes the population of those who are tested from students to teachers and administrators. However, the equity focus, combined with a more positive, less punitive approach to addressing those institutions that are not meeting equity standards may overcome the bad impression that NCLB has left in the minds of teachers and administrators.

3) Require Teachers to Obtain Equity Training for State Licensure

Once children are in school, the major influence on achievement is the quality of teaching, responsible for 30% of differences in achievement (Hattie, 2003). Teachers have also been found to have lowered expectations for Latino/a students with similar records of achievement than for Euro-American and Asian-American students, which can negatively affect student achievement (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Therefore, this policy alternative directly addresses teacher quality by requiring teachers to obtain equity training as part of their certification for state licensure. An example of what this training might entail can be found at http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/development/teams/diversity/diversity.shtm. This training focuses on six areas, including 2) *Staff Talk* (e.g., standards and expectations and beliefs, teacher efficacy, the evolution of "the gap"), 2) *Personal and Cultural Identity* (e.g.,

aspects of culture, factors of diversity, state regulation, and teacher reflection with student feedback), 3) *Behaviors* (e.g., high teacher expectations, classroom expectations, reflection), 4) *Practices* (e.g., grouping practices, student self-assessment, learning strengths), 5) *Structures* (e.g., relationships, climate, support structures and systems), and 6) *Summing It Up* (e.g., review and reflection and evaluation). Assessment tools regarding equity knowledge could also be integrated into the tests for licensure that are already in place in each state to assure that an individual's equity training led to a satisfactory understanding of the topic and of strategies that can be used to improve equity outcomes in schools. States should help fund training directly by providing resources for teacher education programs to enhance their curriculum and to individual teachers seeking recertification.

For areas where teacher education programs do not have the adequate resources for providing equity training as part of their curriculum (or at least not by the time the requirements are set in place), programs could require pre-service teachers to engage in training programs at education service agencies. These agencies are found in almost every state. For example, in Georgia, they are called Regional Education Service Agencies (RESA), and they provide resources for professional learning. There are10 GA RESAs that provide programming such as ESOL training, which could also be part of equity training for licensure.

There are also external, public and private organizations that already provide equity training. For example, the School Improvement Network (http://www.schoolimprovement.com/topics/diversity/) provides programs such as *Courageous Conversations about Race* (description: Through the use of *Courageous Conversations About Race*, your staff will begin to close your school or district's achievement gaps by engaging in honest and safe dialogue about the impact of race and racism on student achievement. Expert Glenn Singleton will help you and your teachers reach a deeper understanding of the racial experience, and by applying the strategies shown through real classroom examples, teachers will learn to create an environment of equity where every student can achieve, regardless of race.); *Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap* (description: Understanding data is essential to reveal the patterns of student achievement and failure, and to check progress in student growth. Help your teachers and leaders learn to see data as a powerful ally in reforming school culture to close achievement gaps. Expert Ruth Johnson shows you how to use data to stimulate change and promote equity for every student, and provides practical strategies for using and analyzing data. Explore how to build strong data leadership teams and learn how to use a variety of tools to extend the reach of data); and *All Means All—What is it About Me You Can't Teach?* (description: If you work in urban schools, you need this program. Designed specifically to help teachers face the challenges of urban classrooms, this award-winning resource by Eleanor Renee Rodriguez shows teachers how to reach every student by implementing the 5 Essential Elements for Student Success. *All Means All* helps your teachers develop and solidify the attitude that no child will be left behind and gives them practical and proven strategies. Each strategy discussed in the program is demonstrated by real teachers in urban classrooms).

Teacher education programs could pay for pre-service teachers to complete these or similar training programs to supplement their in-class education, and in-service teachers could be given wavers to cover the costs of any approved paid services to bring their training up to the level required for recertification.

What's Been Shown to Work

- ***Early intervention:*** This policy option does not specifically target early education teachers, but this requirement could also be applied to teachers seeking certification/licensure in early education.
- ***Teacher quality***: This policy option targets teacher quality directly by providing additional training to teachers so that they can better meet the needs of all students (especially minority students).
- ***School-related factors***: This policy does not directly address school-related factors, but it is sufficiently likely that as teacher quality increases so will the quality of the learning environment and leadership (Hattie, 2003).
- ***System-related factors***: This policy does not directly address system-related factors.
- ***Educational strategies***: The equity training that teachers receive can and should be based on evidence about what works for particular students in particular contexts.

Efficiency

As with the previous policy option, this policy alternative has not been empirically tested on a smaller scale, therefore there is no clear data on the estimated costs of this policy. However, it is still vital to speculate what specific costs this policy would require in order to be implemented. Compared to the other two policy options, it is reasonable to assume that this policy would be the least costly. This is because the policy works within the existing structure of teacher training and certification. The most significant costs of this program would include:

1) State funding given to teacher education programs to develop their curriculum (and potentially to hire new staff/faculty).
2) State funding provided to in-service teachers to complete additional equity training for recertification.
3) Funding needed to develop, revise, and disseminate teacher certification assessment materials.

Like the previous policy, the expected benefits of this program include greater social justice and a reduction in the "educational gap" for Latino/a students (and other traditionally marginalized populations), as well as increased economic productivity (as students are better educated and are then more able to secure employment) and returns to society, largely through reductions in spending on the criminal justice system (as higher levels of education have been shown to be related to less engagement with the criminal justice system). Teachers will also receive additional education, thus improving their ability to secure employment after training and to share their equity-related knowledge with students and community members.

Political Feasibility

In a personal interview with Dr. Jacqueline McDowell, Dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences at Berry College (who has been involved in Georgia state certification design and implementation), the political climate—at least in her state—has been moving toward addressing the multicultural nature of schools and the changing demographics of our nation. There has already been discussion of changing licensure requirements to include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training (which is already required in the teacher education program at Berry College and is an important component of equity training). This suggests that there would

be political support for adding additional requirements and resources to sustain these changes, at least in some states. Before implementing this change, additional information related to political feasibility must be assessed; this could include a survey of in-service and pre-service teachers, teacher education faculty, and state departments of education.

Proposed Course of Action

All three policy options sufficiently meet the criteria of this analysis and ideally, the implementation of these three options—each targeting a different area of intervention (i.e., schools, students, and teachers)—could work together to improve equity in education for Latino/a students. However, based on the analysis of what has shown to work in addressing equity in education, the details of each policy alternative, and the evaluative criteria, the "best" solution appears to be universal preschool. In other words, this policy is sufficiently likely to positively impact the issue of inequity in education for Latino/a youth and justify the costs of implementation, above and beyond the other two options. The tipping point for choosing this policy over the other two options is that in addition to the positive impact smaller-scale preschool policies (i.e., at the local, city, and state level) on student performance (and especially for Latino/a students), early education has been shown to generate significant returns to investment. This option has been well researched and there are model programs across the nation that can be used as a template for designing new preschool programs.

In implementing universal preschool, it is important to note that when it comes to providing early childhood education, high quality matters (Heckman & Masterov, 2007; MacEwan, 2013; Sawhill, Tebbs & Dickens, 2006; Schweinhart, et al., 2005). The returns to society grow as more money is spent on early childhood education (MacEwan, 2013), however, overall quality reflects more than just the money invested in the program. According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2006), quality can be measured based on regulable and process features. Regulable features of early education programs include all features that can be regulated and easily measured, such as a lower group size, higher adult-to-child ratio, and higher education level of teachers/caregivers (NICHD, 2006). Process features are more difficult to measure (due to reliance on observational report), and includes "positive caregiving," which consists of "showing a positive attitude, having positive physical contact, responding to vocalizations, asking questions, reading, and actively encouraging positive behavior" (NICHD, 2006, p. 12). Often, regulable and process features are positively correlated (NICHD, 2006). The Head Start Impact Study (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010), includes similar indicators of quality, but also asserts the importance of classroom literacy and math instructional activities.

Careful consideration will need to be given to assuring that the guidelines for hiring and programming for federally-funded preschools are aimed at "high quality" as defined by the findings of the large amount of empirical research done on this topic (and not simply on policy-makers ideas of what constitutes quality in preschool). Teachers and educational researchers must to be involved in the planning and implementation of this policy. It is also important to design assessment measures and funding mechanisms that are not punitive (in the vein of NCLB), but instead focus on getting resources to those contexts that need them the most. With these considerations in mind, universal preschool has the potential to fight inequity and provide all children—regardless of their background or ethnicity—with a strong foundation to meet their fullest potential.

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