



The Status of Latino/Hispanic Public School Students in the Lehigh Valley

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**A Report for the Latino Education Coalition of the Latino Economic Council,
Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation**

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Key Findings

This report examines the status of the Latino/Hispanic school-aged population of the Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania in the 17 public school districts in Lehigh and Northampton counties. The following findings are based on an analysis of data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, local school districts and interviews with personnel in the Allentown, Bethlehem Area and Easton Area school districts.

- The Latino/Hispanic student population is growing beyond the urban core to all districts, particularly those outside the Route 22 and Interstate 78 corridor. By the 2007-08 school year 22% of students enrolled in the Lehigh Valley (LV) were classified as Latino/Hispanic compared to the statewide rate of 7%.
- Latino/Hispanic students are making progress towards meeting educational standards, particularly in math, however, they lag behind other students in the area of reading. While Latino/Hispanic students improved their results, the increasing statewide standards caused this subgroup to appear to worsen.
- Graduation rates for Latino/Hispanic students slightly lag behind the total graduation rates; however, Latino/Hispanic graduation rates increased slightly from 2008-09 while the graduation rate for all students decreased.
- While the number of Latino/Hispanic students taking the SAT test is increasing, their results lag behind White non-Hispanic and Asian students, particularly on the verbal portion.
- Latino/Hispanic graduates are more likely to enroll in a two year college than a four year, but are also more likely to say they are unsure about their future plans than other graduates.
- At the instructional level, there is a continued need to improve the environment for non-English Language Learner Latino/Hispanic students including increasing instruction about Latino culture.
- There is a need for more minority teachers and staff development for existing teachers in the area of differentiated instruction and cultural awareness.
- There is a need to continue to engage Latino/Hispanic families in schools and provide assistance at the school level for these families.

Introduction

The Latino/Hispanic population of the Lehigh Valley (LV) is rich in culture and vitality. As one of the largest Hispanic communities in the state, our region reflects the diversity of the people and subcultures that comprise this growing community. According to population estimates, in 2008, approximately 14% of residents in Lehigh and Northampton counties were classified as Latino/Hispanic. This level marks a major increase since 2000 (9%) and is significantly higher than our statewide average of 5%¹. Older generations of Latino/Hispanic residents have paved the way for newcomers from many Latin American countries who have moved to our region in search of a better quality of life for their families. As reported in the 2005 study prepared for the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, the Latino/Hispanic population of the LV region has expanded from the inner cities to suburbs as more recent generations of Latino/Hispanic residents move into higher paying, professional jobs.²

Over time, as the Latino/Hispanic community in Lehigh and Northampton counties has grown and diversified, so too have our classrooms. Today, each of the 17 school districts in the LV enrolls a growing number of children of Latino/Hispanic heritage. This growth creates academic and cultural opportunities and challenges for school districts that are accustomed to educating mostly White, non-Hispanic students. Additionally, the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act heighten the need for a better understanding of the current academic, co-curricular, and extracurricular opportunities for Latino/Hispanic students as challenges in these areas may limit the extent to which they are able to successfully meet mandated educational outcomes.

As a step towards understanding the condition of public education for the Latino/Hispanic public school-aged population, the Latino Education Coalition of the Latino Economic Council of the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation contracted with researchers of the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium. The Latino Education Coalition and Latino Economic Council focus their efforts on economic and educational advancement of the Latino population. To assist the group with their goals, our report centers around the outcomes, opportunities and obstacles to success for

¹ Bureau of the Census, www.census.gov/popest/counties/asrh/files/cc-est2008-6race-42.csv.

² *Latinos in the Lehigh Valley, the Dynamics and Impact of this Growing and Changing Population*, by Alegre Research and Demographics 2005.

Latino/Hispanic public school students in Lehigh and Northampton counties. This report begins with a discussion of the enrollment patterns of the 17 school systems, highlighting the growth in the Latino/Hispanic school-aged population. Next, the report explores several key educational outcomes including graduation rates, post-graduation plans, Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) scores and Standardized Achievement Test scores (SAT). Additionally, the report highlights outcomes for and programs available to students in the Allentown (ASD), Bethlehem Area (BASD) and Easton Area (EASD) school districts, which enroll the highest concentration of Latino/Hispanic students in the Lehigh Valley. The report concludes with a discussion of recommendations to enhance learning opportunities for these students.

As a final note, Latino/Hispanic students in our region can trace their families' origins to nearly every country in Latin American, as well as Spain. Because students are from many cultures within the Latino/Hispanic community, aggregating data may mask important cultural differences in students that might undermine strategies to enhance performance. Thus, the analysis presented should be placed within a larger conversation about the relationship between culture, pedagogy and curriculum.

Research Methods

The Pennsylvania State Department of Education (PDE) served as the primary source for data collected for this study. The data were accessed from the website, or were obtained directly from PDE personnel. When possible, data are compared across years. In some instances there was missing data or data was not shared due to PDE data access guidelines. For example, personnel data broken out by race/ethnicity for minority teachers is not available for the districts in this study because their number falls below the allowable reporting threshold.

To more closely examine the availability of programs and services for Latino/Hispanic school children, interviews were held in the Spring of 2008 with officials knowledgeable about Latino/Hispanic issues in the ASD, BASD and EASD. These interviews focused in-depth, on curricular as well as co-curricular issues. A total of ten district administrators, at least 3 people from each district, participated in the interviews. The interviews lasted from 1 to 2 hours. Follow-up conversations were held to clarify

interview information. Although the researchers requested detailed data from the school districts, which would supplement the interviews, complete data sets were not received.

Results: Student Enrollment Comparisons

While overall enrollment in public schools in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania remained relatively flat from the 1999-2000 to 2007-2008, the LV experienced a 14% increase in enrollment (Table 1). Most notably, school districts that have seen an increase in single family housing developments have grown substantially including the East Penn SD (20%), Nazareth Area SD (17%), Parkland SD (20%), and Southern Lehigh SD (13%). Additionally, two urban districts, Allentown SD (11%) and Easton Area SD (4%) saw increases in total enrollment. Several school districts enrolled fewer students in 2008 including the Catasauqua Area SD (-11%) and Pen Argyl SD (-11%). Northern Lehigh SD (-9%) also experienced an enrollment decline, which may be attributed to the lack of available economic opportunities for residents in this region.

Comparing PDE and Bureau of the Census population estimates, there was a higher percentage of Latino/Hispanic school-aged students in the Lehigh Valley compared to the estimated percentage of Latino/Hispanic residents in the total population (Figure 1), suggesting more cultural diversity spread across school-aged children than in the adult population, which is predominately White non-Hispanic. In 2000 about 9% of the population was estimated to be classified as Latino/Hispanic, compared to 14% of the public school-aged population. While both percentages increased, the school-aged population is now about 22% Latino/Hispanic versus an estimated 26% of the total population. Eventually, as these students complete their education and remain here to raise families, we can expect a greater share of Latino/Hispanic residents in the overall population.

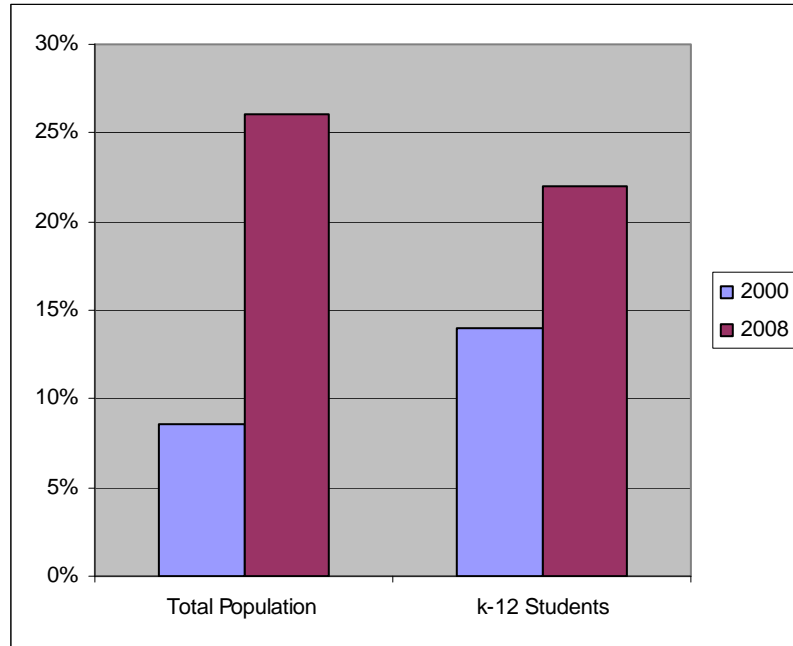
Table 1
Student Enrollment by School District 2000-2008

	Total Enrollment 2008	Percent Change Enrollment 2000-2008	Number Enrolled Hispanic 2008	Percent Hispanic 2008	Percent Change Hispanic 2000-08	Percent Minority 2008	Percent Change Minority 2000-08	Percent Enrollment from Low-income Families 2004-05
Allentown	18,054	11%	11,159	62%	38%	82%	51%	74%
Bangor Area	3,426	<1%	132	4%	68%	7%	132%	24%
Bethlehem Area	15,434	9%	5,220	34%	31%	48%	60%	40%
Catasauqua	1,604	-11%	219	14%	196%	25%	157%	26%
East Penn	8,050	20%	443	6%	357%	15%	175%	9%
Easton Area	8,223	4%	1,448	18%	169%	42%	99%	24%
Nazareth Area	4,716	17%	119	3%	297%	7%	267%	7%
Northampton	5,641	3%	219	4%	217%	7%	161%	14%
Northern Lehigh	1,988	-9%	83	4%	118%	7%	92%	27%
Northwestern Lehigh	2,331	2%	67	3%	148%	4%	69%	7%
Parkland	9,306	20%	525	6%	330%	17%	196%	7%
Pen Argyl	1,889	-11%	49	3%	158%	7%	81%	13%
Salisbury	1,717	-3%	140	8%	204%	17%	123%	13%
Saucon Valley	2,428	11%	69	3%	475%	7%	623%	10%
Southern Lehigh	3,032	13%	89	3%	218%	9%	173%	6%
Whitehall-Coplay	4,162	11%	610	15%	199%	34%	187%	17%
Wilson Area	5,757	15%	533	9%	869%	22%	578%	19%
Total LV	149,558	14%	21,124	12%	241%	21%	190%	20%
Total PA	1,787,351	-2%	133,878	7%	75%	27%	26%	29%

Source: PA Department of Education, http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12statistics/lib/k12statistics/Enrollment_Public_withrace_2008-09.xls, 2000 enrollment by race obtained at: <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12statistics/lib/k12statistics/pssume9900/pssume9900.pdf>; low income data from <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12statistics/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=139940>

Note: Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.

Figure 1
Percentage of Estimated Latino/Hispanic Residents Total Population vs.
K-12 Public School Enrollment



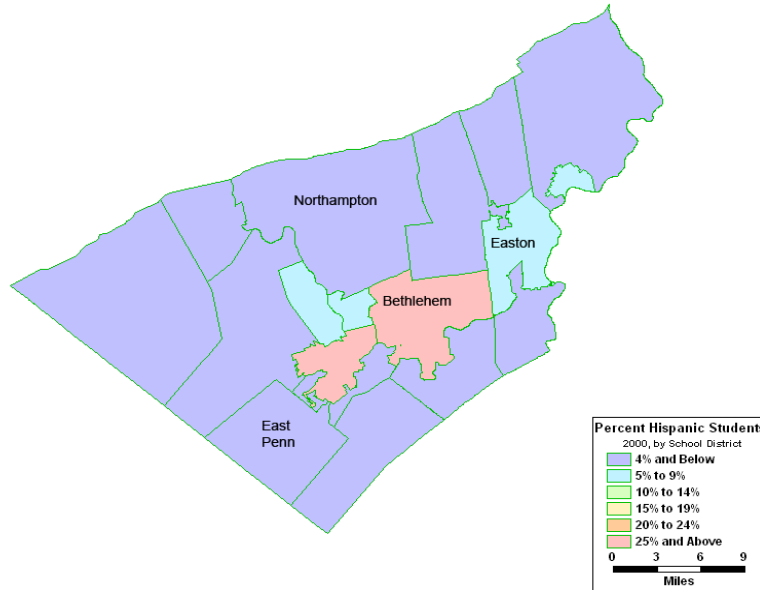
Source: Bureau of the Census, population estimates 2008; PA Department of Education, K-12 statistics.

From 2000 to 2008 all 17 LV school districts experienced growth in their population of Latino/Hispanic students. As mentioned above, by the 2007-08 school year 22% of students enrolled in the LV were classified as Latino/Hispanic compared to the statewide rate of 7%.³

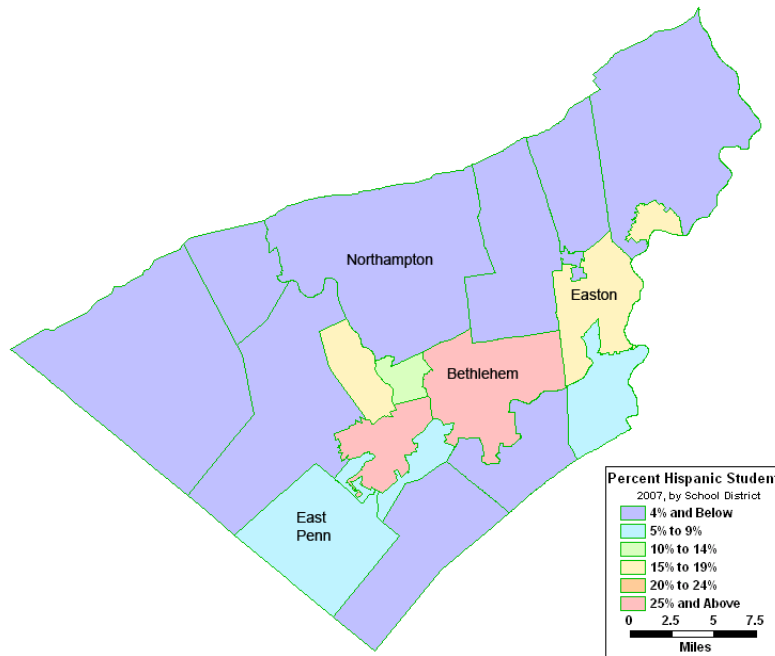
An examination of Maps 1 and 2 indicates that while the ASD and BASD have the largest contingent of Latino/Hispanic students, districts such as the EASD and Whitehall-Coplay SD have seen their percentage of Latino/Hispanic students significantly rise. Latino/Hispanic students now make up at least 15% of the total enrollment in those districts.

³ PA Department of Education statistical tables 2008-09. Statewide totals include enrollments for all school districts, vocational-technical schools, charter schools, special program jointures and state-operated educational facilities. Enrollments calculate attending as of October 1, 2008.

Map 1
Percent of Latino/Hispanic Students by School District
2000



Map 2
Percent of Latino/Hispanic Students by School District
2008



Source: PA Department of Education preK-12 statistics: <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12statistics/site/default.asp?g=0>

It appears from the maps that the growth in Latino/Hispanic students occurred in districts along the Route 22 and I-78 corridors.

Table 1 provides a closer examination of enrollment for Latino/Hispanic and all minority students in the LV. Urban school districts continued to enroll the highest percentages of Latino/Hispanic students in 2008: ASD 62%, BASD 34%, and EASD 18%. Latino/Hispanic students also comprise about 15% of students in Whitehall-Coplay SD, a district of inner ring suburbs. The remaining 13 school districts enroll fewer than 15% Latino/Hispanic students, with the lowest percentage (1%) of students of Hispanic origin located in the Bangor Area School District. However, the greatest percentage gains in Latino/Hispanic students from 2000 to 2008 occurred in the school districts with some of the smallest populations of Latino/Hispanic students. School districts with the largest increase in the percentage of Latino/Hispanic students include the Saucon Valley, East Penn, Southern Lehigh, Nazareth Area, and Wilson Area. In addition, all LV school districts increased the percentage of *minority* students enrolled. While some of the increase can be attributed to the rise in Latino/Hispanic students, in some cases, the percentages of Asian and Black students also increased. For example, in the Parkland and East Penn school districts, the percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander students increased from 2000 to 2008. Likewise, during that same period, the percentage of students classified as Black increased in the Salisbury School District.

Educators and academics who study educational outcomes recognize the strong link between minority status and poverty. U.S. Labor statistics continue to identify a wage gap between minority and non-minority workers. For example, in 2008, the median annual wage for White non-Hispanics employed full-time was \$39,208 compared to \$28,444 for Latino/Hispanic individuals of any race and \$30,862 for Blacks⁴. While Latino/Hispanic men have the highest employment-population ratios of any race/ethnicity, 80.7, they tend to be employed in low wage jobs such as construction and leisure/hospitality. Statistics for Black males show similar results. Therefore, it is likely that a higher percentage of minority students are raised in middle to lower middle income or working class families and more likely to live in poverty than non minorities. For the

⁴ U.S. Department of Labor U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics September 2009, *Labor Force Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity, 2008*.

most part, in the Lehigh Valley it appears that school districts with the highest percentages of minority students also have a higher percentage of students from low-income families. The higher poverty rates in the Bangor Area and Northwestern Lehigh school districts, even with increases in minority students, may also be explained by the high level of rural poverty in these districts.

Results: English Language Learners

As shown in Table 2, Latino/Hispanic students comprise the majority of individuals enrolled in the English Language Learner program (ELL) in LV school districts. The percentage of students enrolled in ELL with Spanish as their primary language range from 100% in eight school districts to 63% in Whitehall-Coplay. Only 6 school districts enroll 50 or more Spanish-speaking students in ELL; ASD (1,841), BASD (970), EASD (327), Salisbury SD (65), Whitehall-Coplay SD (91), and East Penn SD (56). ASD, BASD and EASD, with the largest enrollments of Latino/Hispanic students, actually saw a decrease or little change in the enrollment levels of Spanish-speaking ELL students. Parkland SD, Pen Argyl SD, and Bangor Area SD also experienced declines in Spanish-speaking ELL students even though the percentage of Latino/Hispanic students increased. The largest gains in Spanish-speaking ELL students in these districts occurred in school districts with low overall Latino/Hispanic enrollments. Northwestern Lehigh SD, Northampton SD, Saucon Valley SD, Southern Lehigh SD, and East Penn SD which enroll 6% or fewer students identified as Latino/Hispanic, increased the percentage of Spanish-speaking ELL students from 123% to 900% from 2004-05 to 2006-07. While the actual enrolled number of Spanish-speaking ELL students in these districts is low relative to our urban districts, a continuation of this rapid level of growth could catch these districts, not used to large numbers of Spanish-speaking students, unprepared.

Table 2
Students Enrolled in English Language Learners in Lehigh Valley School Districts
Identifying Spanish as Primary Language
2005-2007

	Number of Spanish-Speaking ELL Student 2007	Percent of ELL Students Primary Language Spanish 2007	Percent Change Students Enrolled in ELL Program with Spanish as Primary Language 2005-07
Allentown	1,841	93%	(1%)
Bangor Area	5	100%	(55%)
Bethlehem Area	970	90%	(5%)
Catasauqua	29	100%	53%
East Penn	56	98%	124%
Easton Area	327	98%	1%
Nazareth Area	13	100%	18%
Northampton	26	79%	160%
Northern Lehigh	28	100%	22%
Northwestern Lehigh	5	100%	400%
Parkland	29	71%	(3%)
Pen Argyl	1	100%	(67%)
Salisbury	65	81%	86%
Saucon Valley	10	100%	900%
Southern Lehigh	7	100%	250%
Whitehall-Coplay	144	63%	15%
Wilson Area	31	94%	123%

Source: PDE official

Note: Percentages rounded to nearest whole number.

Looking more closely at the most recent available data on ELL students in our three case studies, PDE data indicates that Spanish-speaking students in these districts originate from 17 different Latin American countries and Spain.⁵ Students from Puerto Rico make up the largest percentage of students in the ASD (73%) and BASD (87%),

⁵ These countries are: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

followed by the Dominican Republic (17% in ASD and 5% BASD). In the EASD the largest percentage of students are from Mexico (28%) followed closely by Puerto Rico (20%). Beyond these large clusters of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, there are some differences, albeit smaller, across districts. For example, you are more likely to encounter an ELL student of Peruvian or Columbian descent in ASD or EASD than the BASD; while there are more Guatemalan ELL students in the BASD. This may be a function of a few students from a large, newly immigrated family enrolling, or the fact that immigrants cluster near established residents of the same cultural heritage.

Results: Student Outcomes

While there are numerous measures of student achievement that can be used to assess school district performance, since the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, states have focused on standardized test results and graduation rates as a requirement of this Act. In addition to these measures, it is useful to look to post-secondary education plans as an indicator of a district's ability to prepare students for future employment success. Thus, in addition to examining PSSA and graduation results, we also compare post-graduation plans for Latino/Hispanic students to total graduates and mean SAT scores.

Pennsylvania Student System of Assessment

For the purposes of this report, we examine combined PSSA scores for 3rd, 8th and 11th grades from 2007, 2008 and 2009⁶. Tables 3, 4 and 5 identify the results of the percentage of students at proficient or advanced for PSSA scores across the 17 districts. Values highlighted identify when the district did not meet the state standard in that year or when Latino/Hispanic students exceeded the combined student score. Breakouts for 3, 8, and 11 grades are reported for ASD, BASD, and EASD.

Overall, results suggest that Latino/Hispanic students performed less well in reading than math in comparison to district averages. This finding is not surprising given the fact that the majority of ELL students in our region are Spanish-speakers. It is

⁶ We used combined scores in order to ensure that all LV districts are reported. PDE does not report scores when the subgroup size falls below 50 students.

important to note that the No Child Left Behind Act requires 100% grade level proficiency in reading and math by 2014. To reach this level of competency states incrementally increase standards that schools and districts must achieve every few years. During the 2006-07 school year, the statewide target percentage of students to be proficient on the PSSA math exam was 45%. This standard increased to 56% proficiency in 2007-08. Likewise, the statewide reading standard increased from 54% to 63% in 2008. For this reason, the change in standards makes it appear that Latino/Hispanic students fared less well on the exams (Tables 4 and 5) because the new targets were not met.

Four districts failed to meet the math standards for the Latino/Hispanic subgroup in 2008 and 2009. If the state standard would have remained at 45% proficient all districts in 2008 and 2009 would have met the standard. However, even though the state standard was not met, in 11 districts math scores improved from 2007 to 2008 and the percentage scoring proficient in 2009 increased or remained the same in 13 districts from 2007 to 2009. In 2009, Latino/Hispanic students in the Northern Lehigh and Southern Lehigh school districts surpassed the combined math test results for all enrolled students.

Latino/Hispanic students fared less well on the reading exam. In 2007, when the statewide standard was 54% proficient, six districts failed to meet the standard. In 2008 and 2009, with a statewide standard 63% proficiency eight districts failed to meet the standard for the Latino/Hispanic subgroup while six failed to meet the standard in 2009. The Allentown, Bethlehem Area and Bangor school district performed below the current and previous reading standard in both 2008 and 2009. Again, Southern Lehigh Latino/Hispanic students outperformed the average scores for all students taking the reading PSSA exam in 2009.

Table 3
PSSA Results
Percent Proficient/Advanced
LV School Districts 2006-2007

	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Math – All Students 2007	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Math – Hispanic Students 2007	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Reading – All Students 2007	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Reading – Hispanic Students 2007
Allentown	54%	49%	45%	39%
Bangor Area	66%	60%	68%	60%
Bethlehem Area	67%	50%	65%	44%
Catasauqua	68%	60%	64%	48%
East Penn	82%	60%	82%	63%
Easton Area	64%	47%	61%	41%
Nazareth Area	76%	80%	77%	78%
Northampton	72%	58%	73%	57%
Northern Lehigh	70%	61%	69%	56%
Northwestern Lehigh	75%	63%	77%	63%
Parkland	85%	71%	84%	64%
Pen Argyl	76%	86%	72%	43%
Salisbury	79%	52%	79%	51%
Saucon Valley	83%	64%	81%	61%
Southern Lehigh	82%	82%	84%	80%
Whitehall-Coplay	73%	60%	74%	61%
Wilson Area	75%	70%	70%	55%
Statewide Target	45%		54%	

Source: PA Department of Education: http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/cwp/view.asp?A=3&Q=129181

Note: grey shading indicates district did not meet state target; green indicates Latino/Hispanic students exceeded total student scores.

Table 4
PSSA Results
Percent Proficient/Advanced
LV School Districts 2007-2008

	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Math – All Students 2008	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Math – Hispanic Students 2008	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Reading – All Students 2008	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Reading – Hispanic Students 2008
Allentown	56%	52%	47%	42%
Bangor Area	66%	48%	66%	52%
Bethlehem Area	70%	54%	68%	50%
Catasauqua	70%	62%	68%	50%
East Penn	84%	67%	83%	68%
Easton Area	69%	57%	66%	50%
Nazareth Area	78%	66%	77%	69%
Northampton	74%	62%	76%	66%
Northern Lehigh	68%	50%	68%	54%
Northwestern Lehigh	87%	59%	80%	63%
Parkland	87%	78%	85%	73%
Pen Argyl	77%	78%	85%	73%
Salisbury	81%	65%	81%	61%
Saucon Valley	88%	85%	85%	70%
Southern Lehigh	84%	88%	85%	78%
Whitehall-Coplay	78%	64%	75%	57%
Wilson Area	80%	67%	74%	68%
Statewide Standard	56%		63%	

Source: PA Department of Education : http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/cwp/view.asp?A=3&Q=121446

Note: grey shading indicates district did not meet state target; green indicates Latino/Hispanic students exceeded total student scores.

Table 5
PSSA Results
Percent Proficient/Advanced
LV School Districts 2008-2009

	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Math – All Students 2009	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Math – Hispanic Students 2009	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Reading – All Students 2009	Percent Proficient/Advanced Combined Grades Reading – Hispanic Students 2009
Allentown	57%	54%	49%	44%
Bangor Area	66%	48%	66%	52%
Bethlehem Area	70%	55%	69%	50%
Catasauqua	71%	60%	67%	54%
East Penn	84%	70%	83%	65%
Easton Area	75%	51%	68%	57%
Nazareth Area	81%	76%	79%	70%
Northampton	76%	64%	77%	69%
Northern Lehigh	69%	74%	69%	62%
Northwestern Lehigh	80%	61%	78%	64%
Parkland	87%	71%	84%	70%
Pen Argyl	79%	62%	76%	54%
Salisbury	80%	66%	83%	67%
Saucon Valley	86%	75%	83%	69%
Southern Lehigh	85%	86%	86%	89%
Whitehall-Coplay	78%	65%	75%	63%
Wilson Area	86%	75%	85%	74%
Statewide Standard	56%		63%	

Source: PA Department of Education : http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/cwp/view.asp?A=3&Q=121446

Note: grey shading indicates district did not meet state target; green indicates Latino/Hispanic students exceeded total student scores.

As noted earlier, research suggests a strong link between poverty and the percentage enrollment of minority students in a school or school district; higher rates of poverty are correlated with higher rates of minority students. Research also suggests a

inverse relationships between poverty and student outcomes and between the percentage of students classified as minority and student outcomes. In general, as the percentage of students living in poverty increases (or percentage classified as minority), on average, school district (school) standardized test scores decrease⁷. We find interesting results in our analysis of Lehigh Valley school districts related to this phenomenon. As shown in Table 6, as expected, this correlation matrix suggests that as the percentage of low-income increases 2008 PSSA scores in math and reading decline ($p < .01$). The results remain significant even when the Allentown SD, with the highest percentage of low-income students, is removed from the equation and taking into consideration the fact that BASD, EASD, Bangor Area, Catasauqua and Northern Lehigh, with 24% or more students classified at low-income, met state standards in 2006.

These results are also significant ($p < .01$) for the relationship between minority enrollment and test results. However, when the Allentown School District is removed from the correlation, there still remains an inverse relationship between test results and the percentage of enrolled Latino/Hispanic students but it is no longer significant. Only the relationship between the percentage of low income students and reading and math tests remains significant ($p < .01$). Additionally, there is no correlation between the percentage of minority students and reading and math scores. These results suggest that in the Lehigh Valley, the poverty level of students is a stronger predictor of test results (as measured by the PSSA's) than being a Latino/Hispanic or being a member of any minority race/ethnic group.

⁷ For a discussion of the Coleman Report, which first reported this relationship, along with a summary of follow-up studies see *Does Money Matter? The Effect of School Resources on Student Achievement and Adult Success*, Gary Burtless, Ed., 1996 and *Urban Education for the 21st Century, Research, Issues and Perspectives* by Festus E. Obiakor and Floyd D. Beachum Eds.

Table 6
Correlation Matrix
LV School Districts

	Pct. Enrollment low income families	PSSA Combined Math 2007	PSSA Combined Reading 2007	Pct Hispanic 2007	Pct. Minority 2007
Pct. Enrollment low income families	1.00	-.814**	-.785**	.767**	.648**
PSSA Combined Math 2008	-.814**	1.00	.912**	-.420	-.353
PSSA Combined Reading 2008	-.785**	.912**	1.00	-.384	-.238
Pct Hispanic 2008	.767**	-.420	-.384	1.00	.942**
Pct minority 2008	.648**	-.353	-.238	.942**	1.00

Notes: n = 16 – Allentown SD removed from this example; results consistent for 2008 and 2007 PSSA scores.

** = significant at the $p < .01$ level.

Returning back to the PSSA results, as reported in Table 7, the disaggregated PSSA scores for ASD, BASD and EASD suggest that third graders outperformed 8th graders, with scores for 11th graders across the three districts declining sharply. Experts believe that the poor results for eleventh graders are due to the fact that the tests are not taken as seriously by older students, thus they are not concerned about their results, prompting some to suggest a required exit exam for high school completion. Of the three urban districts, ASD students taking the PSSA exam score less well than the other two districts, although reading proficiency in 2009 improved for 3rd and 8th grades. Reading results improved for Latino/Hispanic students in Allentown; the percentage proficient or advanced increased from 54% to 58% in 3rd grade and from 35% to 40% in 8th. Easton Area SD also showed positive results, with higher percentages of students at proficient or

advanced levels in 2009. For example, reading results for Latino/Hispanic students jumped from 59% proficient in 2007 to 65% in 2009. Math results for Latino/Hispanic students showed similar improvements in Easton. Bethlehem Area SD results were mixed with gains in 3rd and 11th grades but declines in proficiency in 8th grade. One last trend in these data concern the low scores in proficiency for Latino/Hispanic 11th graders, in Allentown only 29% scored at least proficient in 2008, decreasing slightly in 2009. Results are similar for Bethlehem Area Latino/Hispanic students and only slightly more favorable in Easton Area. These results raise concerns that many Latino/Hispanic students may not be ready to enter college and will require rudimentary math courses in order to be ready for more advanced college courses. They may also not qualify for more challenging jobs without intensive training. Additionally, recent budget cuts of the Bethlehem Area SD, have forced the closure of the Career Academy High School and reduction of services at the Regional Academic Standards and program services at the pre-K level. These cuts are likely to impede student achievement progress in the future.

Table 7
Allentown, Bethlehem Area, Easton Area
PSSA Results
Percent Proficient/Advanced
2007-08 and 2008-09

	Allentown Total	Allentown Latino/Hispanic	Bethlehem Area Total	Bethlehem Area Latino/Hispanic	Easton Area Total	Easton Area Latino/Hispanic
Reading 2008 grade 3	59	54	74	57	74	59
Math 2008 grade 3	68	65	76	59	85	78
Reading 2008 grade 8	52	35	81	70	75	61
Math 2008 grade 8	50	55	74	61	63	48
Reading 2008 grade 11	43	32	58	33	52	29
Math 2008 grade 11	38	29	48	25	47	30
Reading 2009 grade 3	62	58	70	59	76	65
Math 2009 grade 3	71	67	78	69	87	76
Reading 2009 grade 8	54	40	80	64	81	72
Math 2009 grade 8	47	41	67	50	80	67
Reading 2009 grade 11	45	37	61	40	52	38
Math 2009 grade 11	37	28	48	29	59	35

Source: PA Department of Education State Report Cards; 2008 and 2009 Mathematics and Reading District Level Proficient Results.

One of the factors influencing achievement on standardized tests such as the PSSA is the degree to which students are exposed to enrichment opportunities.

Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses offer the opportunity at the secondary

school level to accelerate learning for capable students. In turn, these students are usually better prepared for more advanced test questions. The ASD provides an example of the degree to which Latino/Hispanic students take accelerated courses. As shown in Table 8, the percentage of Latino/Hispanic students participating in AP courses has increased from 15% to 27% from 2005 to 2008. However, White non-Hispanic students make up a higher percentage each year, with Blacks and Asians a smaller percentage.

These results suggest that White non-Hispanics, which account for only about one-fifth of the student population, comprise a larger percent of students enrolling in these courses. Latino/Hispanic students, which represent the majority of ASD enrollment, are not proportionally represented in these accelerated courses. They are also not well represented in the Districts National Honor Society. According to ASD personnel, of the 89 students in this program in the 2007-08 school year only 19 or 21% were Latino/Hispanic. Our study did not investigate the reasons for these low participation rates; however, it would be useful to further investigate the proportion of Latino/Hispanic students are in college preparatory classes relative to the student population as this track of classes is most likely to include students enrolled in AP/Honors classes and join the Honor Society.

Table 8
Allentown School District: Ethnic breakdown of the number of students taking AP or Honors courses

	2004-05		2005-06		2006-07		2007-08	
American Indian/Alaskan Native	6	0.2%	4	0.02%	7	0.03%	2	0.01%
Asian	142	6.2%	134	6.2%	137	5.8%	114	4.9%
Black	161	7.1%	180	8.3%	264	11.3%	279	11.9%
Latino/Hispanic	346	15.2%	410	18.9%	517	22.1%	629	26.9%
White	1626	71.3%	1437	66.4%	1418	60.5%	1280	54.7%
Total	2281	100.0%	2165	100.0%	2343	100.0%	2340	100.0%

Source: Allentown SD personnel

Note: Calculated as the percent of enrollments, not discrete students

Student mobility, or fluidity between schools, also has a negative impact on student performance. Movement during the school year is particularly problematic as students must adapt to new teaching styles as they adjust to a new faces and a new school

environment. As shown in our Allentown example, Latino/Hispanic students, particularly at the elementary level, are more likely than White non-Hispanic and Black students to leave a school in a given year. On average, from 2005-2007 about 20% of all students in elementary school left compared to 22% of Latino/Hispanic students. Likewise, on average, 17% of middle school students changed schools compared to 20% of Latino/Hispanic students. In high school, on average, 18% of students moved, however 22% of Hispanic students moved. Mobility, or fluidity, is defined as the number of students transferring after day 1 of the school year, so it could be (and frequently is) that students are moving from one ASD school to another versus movement out of the district. Mobility may also lead to drop outs.

Frequent mobility and poor academic and behavior problems may lead students to drop out of school. In order to compare Latino/Hispanic drop out rates to other racial/ethnic groups, data were obtained for Allentown and Bethlehem Area school districts from 2005-06 through the 2007-08 school years. As shown in Table 9 at first glance, there appears to be a higher drop out rate for Latino/Hispanic students in the ASD. The drop out rate also appears to be increasing from 62% to 65% in two years, while the rate for Black non-Hispanic and White non-Hispanics is decreasing. However, relative to the percentage of Latino/Hispanic students enrolled in the district, these percentages are proportional to their total enrollment. For example, during the 2007 school year, Latino/Hispanic students made up 60% of the student body, thus a 65% drop out rate, although higher than the percentage Latino/Hispanic of all enrolled, is not as dramatic as initially suspected. The drop out rate is calculated as the number of students who dropped out in a given year divided by the total number of students enrolled at any time during the year.

Table 9
Allentown School District: Race/Ethnic breakdown of dropouts

	2005	2006	2007
American Indian	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
Asian	1.5%	0.4%	0.6%
Black Non-Hispanic	17.7%	17.0%	15.8%
Latino/Hispanic	61.5%	65.0%	65.2%
White Non-Hispanic	19.2%	17.4%	18.2%
All dropouts	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: ASD personnel.

Note:2007-08 Dropout data anticipated available October 1, 2008

Data from the BASD suggests that Latino/Hispanic student drop out rates, although lower than the ASD, might be more problematic as the percentage of drop out in each year is greater than the percentage of Latino/Hispanic students in the overall population. For example, during the 2007-08 school year Latino/Hispanic students accounted for 34% of the overall student population; however, the drop out rate was 46%. While the drop out percentage did decline, as the percentage of White non-Hispanic students increased sharply, it is unclear from the data whether these trends will continue.

Table 10
Bethlehem Area School District: Race/Ethnic breakdown of dropouts

	2005	2006	2007
American Indian	0%	1%	1%
Asian	2%	1%	<1%
Black Non-Hispanic	10%	12%	12%
Latino/Hispanic	53%	58%	46%
White Non-Hispanic	35%	28%	41%
All dropouts	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

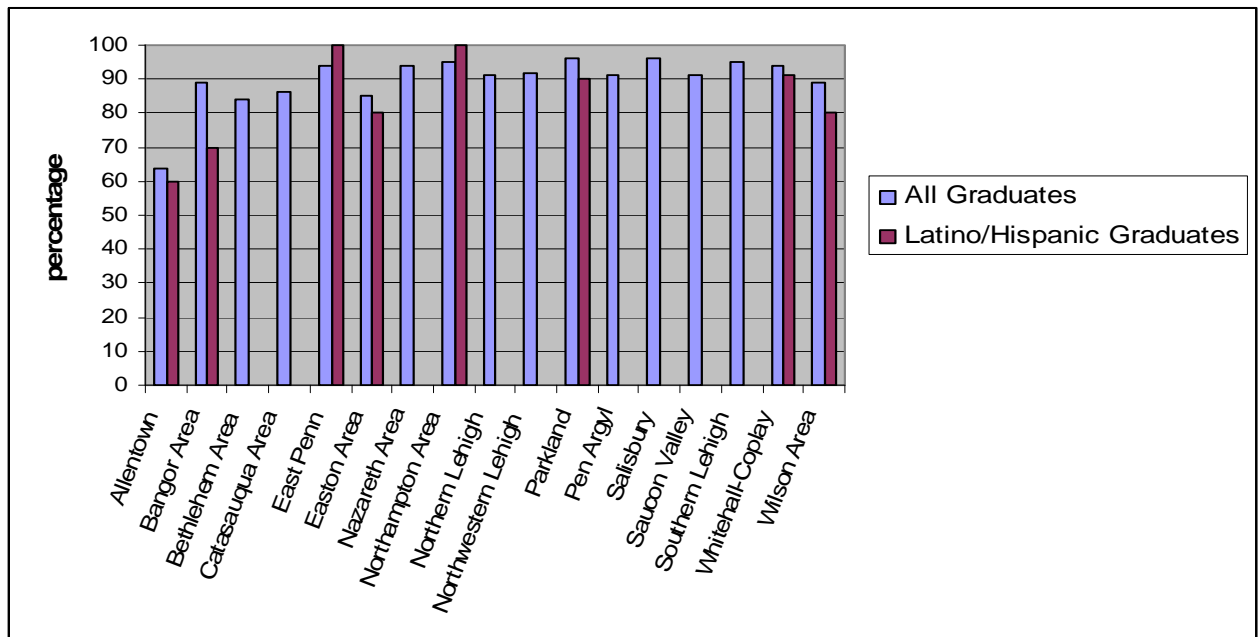
Source: BASD personnel.

Graduation Rates

Graduation rates for 2007 and 2008 for all school districts are reported in Figures 2 and 3. From 2006-07 to 2007-08, six of 17 school districts maintained or increased their graduation rates. Only Allentown did not meet the standard of an 80% graduation rate in 2008, while Allentown, Catasauqua Area, and Pen Argyl school districts did not

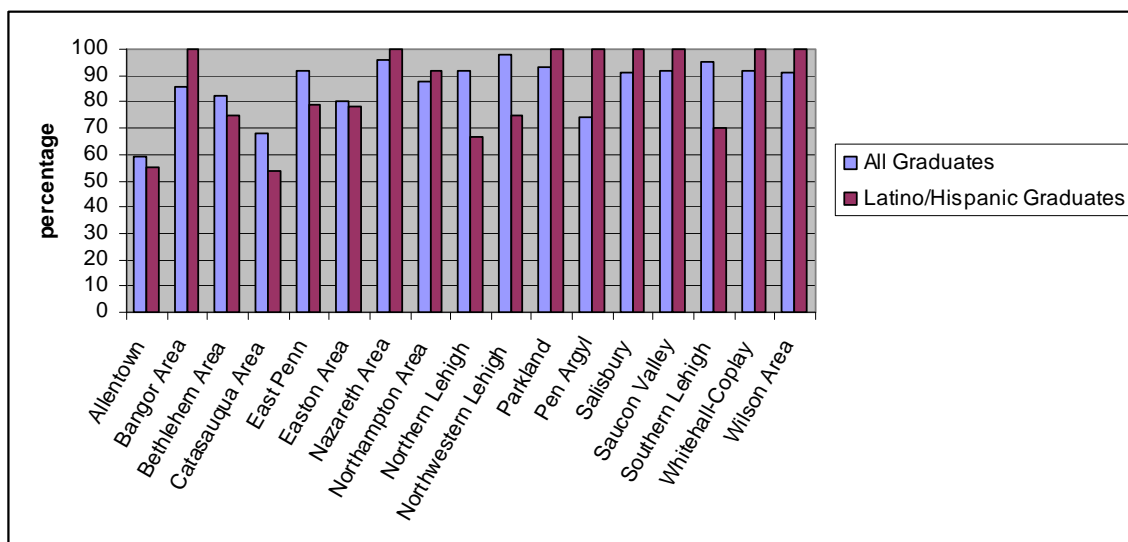
meet the statewide graduation standard of 80% in 2009. The average graduation rate in the 17 school districts in the Lehigh Valley was 90% in 2007 decreasing to 86% in 2008. These Figures also compare Latino/Hispanic graduation rates to all graduates. By 2008 all districts had a sufficient number of Latino/Hispanic students for the state to report out. Between 2007 and 2008 the graduation rates of Latino/Hispanic students increased slightly to 85%. Four of the six school districts reporting in 2007 increased their rates of Latino/Hispanic graduates, only Allentown and East Penn school districts saw a decline. This slight increase, while positive, raises further concerns about student success. On the one hand more Latino/Hispanic students are graduating from high school; however, PSSA results suggest that they might not have sufficient basic skills and knowledge about post-high school career and educational opportunities.

Figure 2
Graduation Rates 2007*



Note * In 2007 several districts did not have a large enough population of Latino/Hispanic students to report graduation rates.

Figure 3
Graduation Rates 2008



Source: PA Department of Education, District Report Cards 2006-07 and 2007-08

Post Graduation Activity

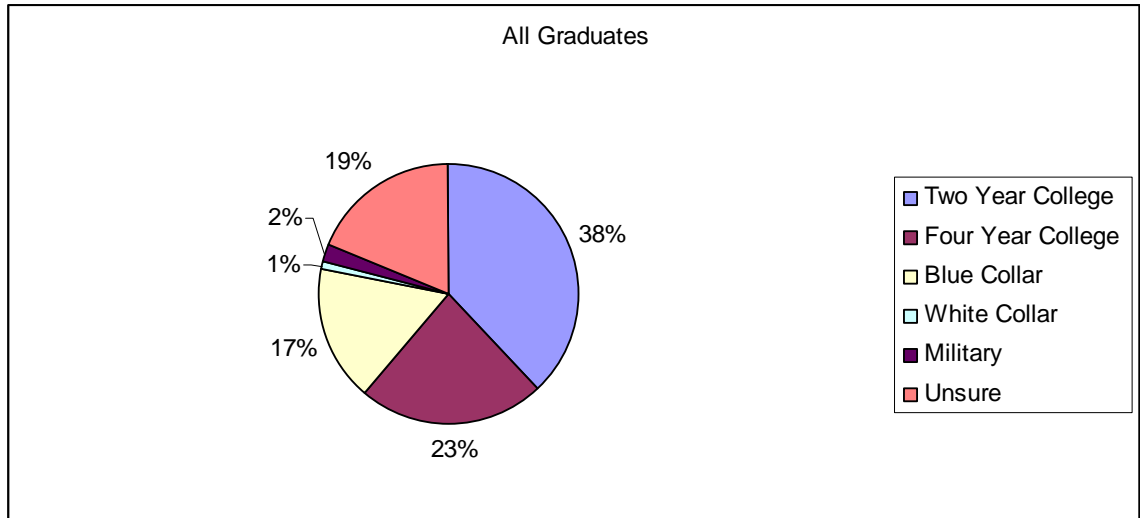
According to the PDE, in Pennsylvania, approximately 72% of public high school graduates in the 2007-08 school year planned to go to a two or four year college or university.⁸ Breaking students out by race/ethnicity, statewide, approximately 61% of Latino/Hispanic students were college bound, compared to 74% White non-Hispanic, and 62% Black non-Hispanic. In this section, we focus on post-graduation activity for the Allentown SD, Bethlehem Area SD and Easton Area SD.

Approximately 61% of all graduates of the Allentown SD planned to attend a two- or four-year college or university, an increase from 55% of graduates in 2007 and 52% in 2006. The percentage of Latino/Hispanic students planning to attend a two- or four-year college or university was comparable at 54%. Comparing future plans of all graduates to those of Latino/Hispanic graduates, it appears that Latino/Hispanic high school graduates in the Allentown SD (Figures 4 and 5) were less likely to say that they would enroll in a four-year institution (12% vs 23%), more likely to enroll in a two-year

⁸ *Public Schools High School Graduates 2007-08*, PDE 2009.

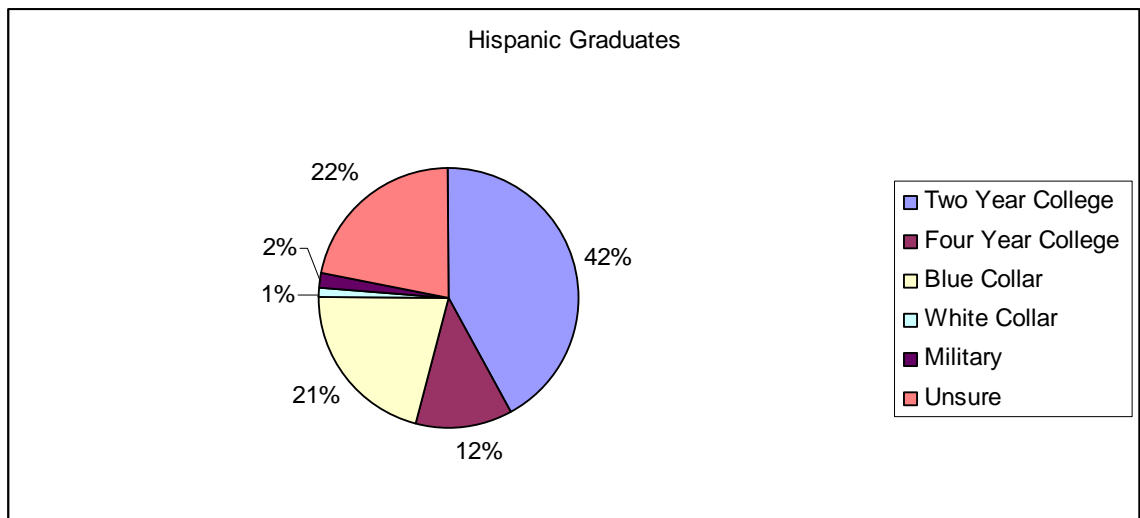
institution (42% vs. 38%) or enter into a blue collar job (21% vs. 17%) and more likely to be unsure (22% vs. 19%) of their plans than overall averages.

Figure 4
Allentown SD Plans After Graduation 2008



Source: PA Department of Education Personnel

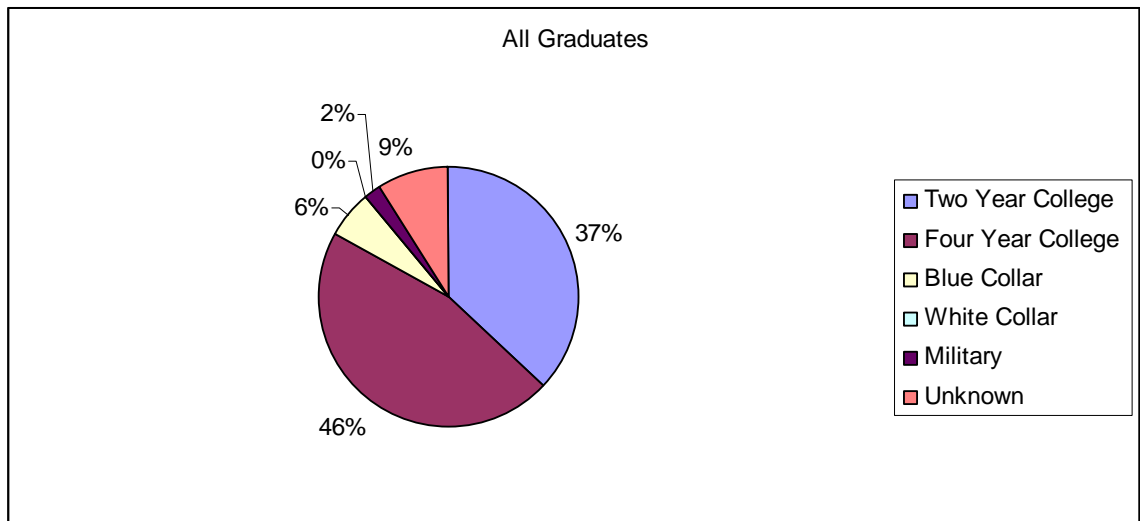
Figure 5
Allentown SD Plans After Graduation 2008



Source: PA Department of Education Personnel

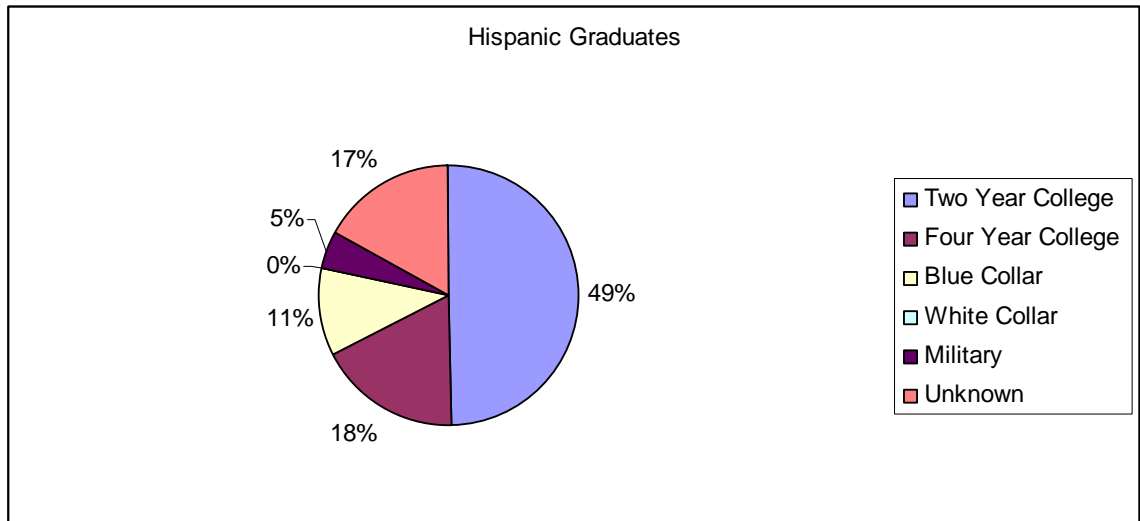
In 2008, the college-bound rate of the BASD exceeded the state average; 83% of graduates from Bethlehem Area high schools planned to enroll in a two- or four-year college or university, compared to 77% in 2007. As reported in Figure 7, more Latino/Hispanic graduates than total graduates planned to enroll in a two-year institution (49% vs. 37%) than a four-year institution (18% vs. 46%). Also, a greater percentage of Latino/Hispanic graduates said they were unsure (17% vs. 9%) about their future plans than the aggregate percentage of graduates. While the actual percentage of Latino/Hispanic students seeking a four-year degree in Bethlehem is higher than in Allentown (27% to 15%), the gap between Latino/Hispanic students seeking a four-year degree is actually larger in the Bethlehem district.

Figure 6
Bethlehem Area SD Plans After Graduation 2008



Source: PA Department of Education Personnel

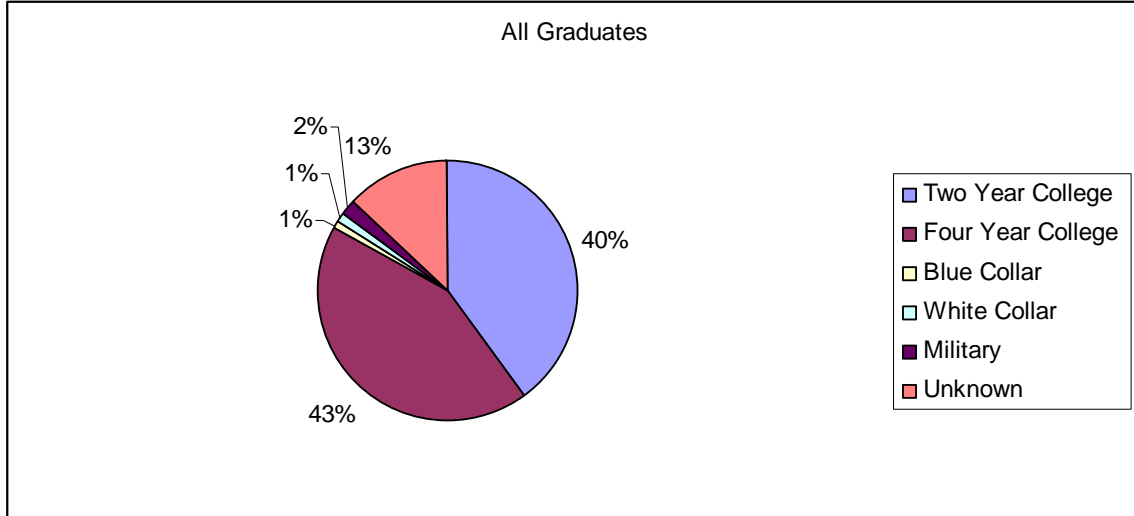
Figure 7
Bethlehem Area SD Plans After Graduation 2008



Source: PA Department of Education Personnel

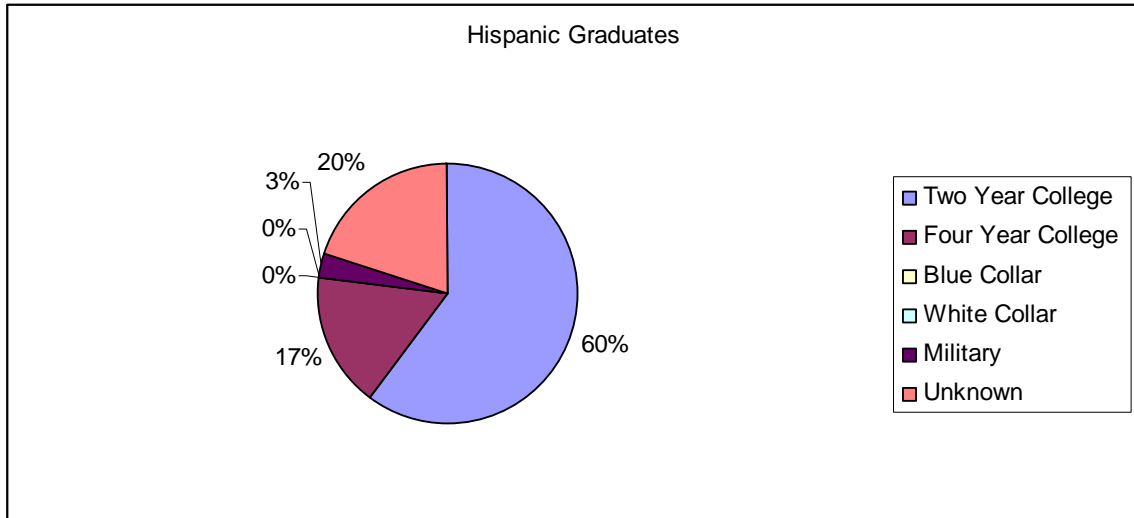
In 2008, 83% of graduates from the EASD planned to attend a two- or four-year degree, which is an increase from 79% in 2007 (Table 8). As is the case in the other districts, a higher percentage of Latino/Hispanic graduates than all graduates planned to enroll in a two-year institution (60% vs. 40%) than four-year institution (17% vs. 43%). A larger percentage of Easton Area SD Latino/Hispanic graduates were unsure about their plans after graduation in comparison with the total population of graduates (20% and 13%).

Figure 8
Easton Area SD Plans After Graduation 2008



Source: PA Department of Education Personnel

Figure 9
Easton Area SD Plans After Graduation 2008



Source: PA Department of Education Personnel

The results presented here suggest a desire on the part of Latino/Hispanic students to enroll in higher education programs upon graduation. A larger percentage of these

students planned to attend a two-year institution than the total percentage of graduates. These data, along with PSSA results, suggest that local community colleges are playing a large role in the continuing education of Latino/Hispanic students. Area high school guidance counselors and community college staff could enhance efforts to build programs that target this population.

A second conclusion from these results is that there is a higher percentage of Latino/Hispanic students who are unsure about their plans after graduation. High school guidance counselors and our local Workforce Investment Board have an opportunity to improve upon career service information to these students, providing information about career pathways and opportunities for those that do not plan to go on to college.

Results: Standardized Achievement Tests

Standardized Achievement Tests (SAT) are used by many colleges and universities as an estimate of college success. While these tests have been criticized for being racially and ethnically biased, much of the higher education community continues to use the SAT as a key component of admission. Table 11 reports aggregate SAT scores from 2004 through 2007 by county broken out by race/ethnicity. Overall, SAT scores in the LV have declined from 2004 to 2007, particularly in Northampton County. Verbal scores for all race/ethnicities declined during this period in Northampton County, while in Lehigh County scores for Asian and White test-takers increased and scores for Latino/Hispanic and Black students decreased. This is a similar trend found statewide. Looking at math scores in Northampton County, the SAT average score decline. In Lehigh County and statewide, scores increased or stayed the same across all race/ethnic groups.

Table 11
SAT Results by County 2004 through 2007

	2004		2005		2006		2007			
	Verbal	Math	Verbal	Math	Verbal	Math	Writing	Verbal	Math	Writing
Northampton County										
Asian	513	554	508	542	511	557	514	493	519	475
Black	442	428	438	421	430	422	418	424	417	414
White	516	514	513	516	503	508	492	506	508	494
Latino/Hispanic	472	463	456	438	456	480	442	455	444	435
Other	502	501	514	503	473	478	477	456	496	447
No response	530	521	524	515	494	479	463	502	495	500
Lehigh County										
Asian	517	564	540	582	542	591	533	552	580	543
Black	439	412	450	433	428	426	407	437	434	429
White	552	527	531	531	517	522	505	517	525	506
Latino/Hispanic	440	430	452	432	442	438	424	434	434	418
Other	477	492	485	491	471	482	469	476	485	462
Not reporting	545	540	544	541	506	507	488	532	520	514
Statewide										
Asian	490	545	495	556	492	554	490	499	553	493
Black	404	399	402	399	406	397	395	407	402	396
White	508	512	511	517	505	515	494	504	514	492
Latino/Hispanic	454	452	456	458	447	448	433	450	451	433
Other	492	488	491	490	484	489	471	481	482	4699
No response	505	510	484	486	451	453	435	439	443	426

Turning to Tables 12 and 13, in Northampton County the number of total test takers has increased by 19% from 2004 to 2007. Latino/Hispanic and White non-Hispanic students account for the largest growth by race/ethnicity. From 2004 to 2007 the number of Latino/Hispanic students taking the SAT increased by 130% in Northampton County. The total number of

students taking the SAT in Lehigh County also increased by 15% from 2004 to 2007. While there were gains across all racial/ethnic groups, the rate of Latino/Hispanic students increased by 106%, which suggests a clear trend toward interest in seeking a degree in higher education. It is also important to note that the rate of increase in the number of Latino/Hispanic students in the Lehigh Valley that took the SAT far surpasses the overall rate of growth among this population, providing further evidence of increased interest in higher education within this group. The fairly dramatic increase in the number of Latino/Hispanic students taking the SAT may also be contributing to the decline in overall scores amongst the group, with more marginal students who once bypassed the exam now taking the SATs.

Table 12
SAT Takers by Race/Ethnicity
Northampton County
2004-2007

	No. taking 2004	2004	No. taking 2005	2005	No. taking 2006	2006	No. taking 2007	2007
Asian	38	2%	45	2%	70	3%	51	2%
Black	69	3%	67	3%	81	4%	100	4%
White	1,412	71%	1,578	79%	1,655	79%	1,864	79%
Latino/Hispanic	79	4%	105	5%	111	5%	180	8%
Other	50	3%	61	3%	59	3%	60	3%
No response	332	17%	135	7%	128	6%	107	5%
Total	1,980	100%	1,991	100%	2,104	100%	2,363	100%

Source: College Board

Table 13
SAT Takers by Race/Ethnicity
Lehigh County
2004-2007

	No. taking 2004	2004	No. taking 2005	2005	No. taking 2006	2006	No. taking 2007	2007
Asian	95	4%	110	4%	122	4%	111	4%
Black	81	3%	100	4%	116	4%	123	4%
White	1,775	67%	2,024	75%	2,030	74%	2,226	74%
Latino/Hispanic	149	6%	173	6%	204	7%	308	10%
Other	82	3%	101	4%	105	4%	103	3%
No response	452	17%	186	7%	152	6%	146	5%
Total	2,634		2,694		2,729		3,017	

Source: College Board

Looking more closely at results for Allentown SD, Bethlehem Area SD and Easton Area SD broken out by race/ethnicity from 2006-2008 (Tables 14, 15 and 16), it appears that Latino/Hispanic students in the ASD perform less well, on average, than all other groups in each of the testing areas. Results are mixed in the Bethlehem Area SD, Latino/Hispanic students performed better on the mean verbal score than Blacks but worse in math and writing than all other race/ethnicities. In the Easton Area SD, Latino/Hispanic students performed better than Black test takers in math, verbal, and writing, but worse than White non-Hispanics and Asians. In sum, the information presented in the SAT tables suggests that Latino/Hispanic students are interested in seeking a degree in higher education, however, test score results suggest a need for increased preparation for these exams across the three school districts.

Table 14
Mean SAT Scores
by race/ethnicity
Allentown SD 2006 – 2008

	Asian	Black	Latino/Hispanic	White non-Hispanic	Other	No Response	Total
No. taking test 2006	12	42	77	162	19	15	327
Math 2006	478	424	414	500	379	479	461
Verbal 2006	431	431	411	496	388	483	459
Writing 2006	425	399	387	488	418	467	444
No. taking test 2007	18	52	118	160	27	17	392
Math 2007	504	433	418	505	453	434	460
Verbal 2007	486	435	45	495	473	454	459
Writing 2007	456	416	398	481	465	429	441
No. taking test 2008	20	58	100	141	16	15	350
Math 2008	517	403	457	500	460	459	457
Verbal 2008	466	409	439	490	411	440	454
Writing 2008	448	387	411	441	441	436	437

Data source: Allentown SD official.

Table 15
Mean SAT Scores
by race/ethnicity
Bethlehem Area SD 2006 – 2008

	Asian	Black	Latino/Hispanic	White non-Hispanic	Other	No Response	Total
No. taking test 2006	12	19	40	279	12	43	408
Math 2006	605	415	444	522	506	463	505
Verbal 2006	541	431	456	516	522	473	503
Writing 2006	534	394	443	500	554	439	486
No. taking test 2007	15	36	111	501	21	31	716
Math 2007	531	443	436	515	482	501	498
Verbal 2007	474	433	436	514	463	504	495
Writing 2007	478	434	418	502	461	504	484
No. taking test 2008	23	48	91	550	14	27	756
Math 2008	526	421	453	516	426	467	498
Verbal 2008	494	442	440	515	447	498	501
Writing 2008	520	428	432	506	436	485	490

Data Source: Bethlehem Area SD official.

Table 16
Mean SAT Scores
by race/ethnicity
Easton Area SD 2006 – 2008

	Asian	Black	Latino/Hispanic	White non-Hispanic	Other	No Response	Total
No. taking test 2006	23	31	21	256	12	20	363
Math 2006	535	418	415*	497	458	485	486
Verbal 2006	494	412	428*	502	487	499	488
Writing 2006	497	411	429*	492	463	453	478
No. taking test 2007	14	45	30	289	8	19	406
Math 2007	545	387	446	496	420	467	479
Verbal 2007	534	414	466	498	446	463	485
Writing 2007	505	396	447	493	398	479	476
No. taking test 2008	18	49	36	290	12	14	420
Math 2008	541	420	437	514	435	427	492
Verbal 2008	503	422	437	502	430	462	484
Writing 2008	514	414	422	488	415	449	471

Data Source: Easton Area SD official.

*Mexican/Mexican American scores not reported as the number of test takers falls below allowable reporting.

** “Other” includes American Indian/Alaskan Native.

Summary of Quantitative Data Findings

Looking across the quantitative data presented thus far, first and foremost, it is clear that the size of the Latino/Hispanic student population is growing in the Lehigh Valley, particularly in inner ring suburbs. As the rate of students continues to increase, school districts will need to adapt their curriculums and services to support this population. Results from our analysis of education outcomes are mixed. Latino/Hispanic students continue to underperform on the PSSA reading test, on average. However, results are improving. Latino/Hispanic students performed better in math, although they continue to lag behind other ethnic groups. SAT results also suggest a lag in average test scores, suggesting a need to focus on exam preparation for these students. The increase in the number of Latino/Hispanic students is promising, however, without adequate preparation for college, these students may face challenges entering college. Pennsylvania's two-year colleges are the most likely place where students plan to enroll. Given the PSSA and SAT results, it appears that colleges like Northampton Community College and Lehigh Carbon Community College must develop or expand remedial classes in order to prepare students for more rigorous courses. While many Latino/Hispanic students are college bound, a large percentage of graduates are unsure about their plans after graduation suggesting the opportunity for increased participation of guidance counselors, higher education staff, and local Workforce Investment Boards to discuss careers and future educational opportunities at the secondary level.

In order to better understand the issues facing Latino/Hispanic students highlighted here, we conducted interviews with administrators in the three Lehigh Valley school districts with the largest number of Hispanic students the ASD, BASD and EASD. The three urban district in the LV combined are home to one the largest populations of Latino/Hispanic students in the state. These districts face multiple problems of student and families in poverty, older buildings, and increasing operating costs. The overall objectives of these interviews were to learn about curricular and extra-curricular opportunities available to and obstacles for Latino/Hispanic students in our education systems. Insight provided through these discussions, combined with the information above can be used by district officials to realign resources in order to improve future results.

In addition to these interviews, two members of the Latino Education Coalition administered a survey to Latino/Hispanic 9-12 grade students in the ASD, BASD, and EASD in spring of 2009. This non-random survey was administered to a small sample of ELL students and other Latino/Hispanic students willing to participate. A total of 71 surveys were completed; 10 in ASD, 31 in BASD, and 30 in EASD. While we can not draw generalizations from this small sample, the data provide a first step towards understanding the extent to which Latino/Hispanic students engage in school activities and feel welcome in their schools.

Results: School District Interviews

Over the last few years the Allentown, Bethlehem Area and Easton Area school districts, have taken steps to address the educational needs of Latino/Hispanic students. For example, in the BASD the Committee on Diversity, comprised of teachers, parents, and community members has met for the last seven year to discuss concerns and seek opportunities for minorities in the areas of hiring, staff development and parent participation. In the ASD, district and school administrators have worked to build a stronger connection with Latino/Hispanic students and their families. For example, this year there are seven parent liaisons working on all types of education, health, and human service issues faced by students and their families. In EASD, the focus has been to address the needs of multicultural students. They now also have a parent liaison helping families with education and non-education needs.

In this section we summarize findings from interviews with district administrators, which were focused on issues affecting Latino/Hispanic students. We divide the section into Curricular and Instructional Issues, Extracurricular Opportunities, and School District Culture and Community Engagement.

Curricular and Instructional Issues

This section examines the ways in which our three school districts use curriculum and instruction to meet learning objectives for Latino/Hispanic students. We divide the

discussion into issues that affect English Language Learners and those that affect students in regular education courses. We begin with a discussion of instruction.

Instructional Materials and Technology

Differentiated learning is required for all public school students in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Differentiated learning is the formal method of instruction whereby classroom instruction is tailored to individual student competency levels and learning styles. Teachers, armed with individual student data, teach at multiple levels within a classroom, varying pedagogical methods in order to meet each student's individual learning styles. Ideally, instruction is paired with appropriate textbooks and instructional materials.

In the case of ELL classrooms, administrators from all districts noted that data from the Worldclass Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) test, which is administered to all ELL students, helps to tailor individualized instruction. The WIDA differs from other standardized tests as it tests language proficiency in subject areas such as math and science. If students are having trouble with language comprehension, ELL teachers work with general education teachers to provide additional learning support. Additionally, an administrator in the EASD noted that 4-sight tests are used in conjunction with the WIDA at the elementary school level. In the ASD, administrators said that teachers are more likely to use the WIDA at the elementary school level as it is easier to get the results to each student's teacher, who instruct across all core subject areas, versus multiple subject teachers in the secondary schools. ELL teachers in each district are trained to analyze individual results in order to tailor instruction to each student's need. An administrator in EASD noted that ELL students scored higher on reading comprehension on the PSSA, in part due to individualized instruction provided through testing.

In each district, new ELL students or students who perform poorly on the WIDA are placed into contained ELL classrooms, for up to a year. The purpose of these classes is to immerse students in the English language as quickly as possible, with instructional support, in the hopes of moving them to general education classes with pull-outs. At the high school level in the EASD, a paraprofessional will work with students bridging to

general education classes, even attending sewing classes, if necessary, to help transition ELL students. Also, in the EASD, remediated instruction is available as well as small group instruction for students needing more individualized instruction. Read 180 is the primary instructional method used in the EASD and BASD. This method of instruction combines writing, reading, computer software, and audio tapes, to teach English at an individualized pace. In all districts administrators note that Read 180 has proven helpful. In the ASD, Read 180 is used at the high school level while other curriculum such as Visions and Shining Star, which are geared towards inner city youth, are used at the elementary and middle school.

ELL funding is supplemented by federal Title III LEP program funds. Up to \$10,000 are available to Local Education Agencies based on ELL enrollment. Funds can be used for enhanced English language instruction, professional development, and enhanced instruction in core academic subjects.⁹ For the most part, administrators across the districts find that ELL instruction is on target.

Once students progress and are proficient in English, they are placed into non-ELL classes. This transition may be partial, until a student is capable of succeeding in all courses. Once they transition, students have the option of seeking continued assistance from ELL teachers. In our interviews we came across several concerns for Latino/Hispanic students integrating into general education curriculum.

One of the biggest obstacles to educating non-ELL Latino/Hispanic students, as noted by our interviewees in the BASD and ASD is the degree to which textbooks and other instructional materials hinder learning for Latino/Hispanic students. For example, an administrator discussed how textbooks lack language specific context so that students new to American culture, or unfamiliar with a western perspective, are able to work through course materials more easily. While text book companies are adapting their textbooks, offering more differentiated learning opportunities, it is still challenging to find materials across all subject areas. In general, BASD district administrators we spoke with feel that there is an overemphasis on western perspective for everything from text books to library books and reference materials. They recognize the need for a broader

⁹ *Title III Requirements and Responsibilities* February 6, 2008 Powerpoint presentation Title III PA State Director.

base, from multiple perspectives, for all students. For example, as noted by one administrator, “students of all types don’t have knowledge of the geography and history of Latin America. What students do learn about Latin America is brief, often in short pockets of time without a continuum of learning in social studies combined with geography.” In another administrator’s opinion, “Latino/Hispanics are more likely to learn about the contributions of African-Americans than Latinos – they don’t know about their own culture.”

To remedy these concerns the BASD has focused its effort at the elementary level, purchasing textbooks that are sensitive to this issue. They also bring in Latino authors and artists whenever possible and feature Latinos and African-American writers in all aspects of the curriculum for all students. The ELL coordinator also purchases library materials that feature minorities in addition to what the schools themselves may purchase.

To address multicultural concerns, the EASD is using their school libraries to diversify books. ELL teachers are given the opportunity every year to recommend books geared towards Latino/Hispanic students. In the ASD administrators have focused on integrating books into elementary schools and there is an effort for science books to be more attuned to English Language Learners. Additionally, the social studies curriculum administrator has worked with teachers to integrate community elements into coursework. For example, these courses may discuss the different cultures of students, in a larger lesson about Pennsylvania communities. Another way that ASD has been able to bring culture into the curriculum is to offer Spanish class for Spanish speakers. In this class students read a wide array of books from Latino authors. However, a difficulty facing all districts, as noted by administrators in the ASD and BASD, are the continued budget problems, which prevent more creative ways to reach students.

In today’s technology-driven society, computer competency is also recognized as a necessity for success. While all schools have computers and provide computer instruction, interview participants believe that computers are not available at home for many Latino/Hispanic students. In the case of the BASD, grant money allowed middle school students their own computer for use during the school day. This program has been discontinued. Further, connecting to the internet beyond school is a challenge for district

and school personnel who must prepare students for the job market. In all districts computers are available in all classrooms and on carts, as needed.

Teachers and Staff Development

Hiring enough instructional staff to reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the students is a problem across the state and nation. Schools in the Lehigh Valley are no exception. The composition of the Allentown School District instructional staff best illustrates the difficulty of hiring minority teachers. Of the 1,296 instructional staff only 6% were minority; only 4% Latino/Hispanic. Non-instructional staff more closely reflects the composition of students. By 2008-09 ASD increased their number of Latino/Hispanic teachers to 59 (from 52 in 2006). Of the 756 ASD non-instructional staff 26% were minority; 20% identified themselves as Latino/Hispanic. The Bethlehem Area school district faces a similar imbalance in the percentage of Latino/Hispanic teachers and staff relative to the student population. During the 2008-09 school year the Bethlehem Area School District had a total of 173 full-time staff identified as Latino/Hispanic, representing about 10% of all staff. Of this amount 52, or 4%, were classified as classroom teachers and 27 were identified as teacher's aides. Of the new hires for 2008-09, 7 were Latino/Hispanic. Finally, only 11 guidance counselors and only 3 principals identified as Latino/Hispanic.

Allentown, Bethlehem Area and Easton Area school district officials are aware of these imbalances and do make efforts to recruit minority school teachers. For example, BASD hosts a minority recruiting day, however, they may only get 25 applicants for the event and these same applicants are being recruited by other districts offering better compensation. ASD and EASD administrators also attend minority recruitment fairs. In 2008-09 ASD staff participated in 8 recruitment fairs, with three directly targeting minority teachers. Only 1 teacher was hired out of these three fairs, many more teachers were hired in local recruitment fairs held by the ASD, Moravian College and Kutztown Job Fair.¹⁰ As noted by staff of all districts, because the pool of minority applicants is so low, it is challenging to attract individuals to Lehigh Valley school districts. This is particularly true in core teaching positions. Furthermore, good veteran teachers are

¹⁰ Allentown School District Recruiting, Diversity and Retention Report 2008-09.

recruited to other districts. As noted by an administrator in the ASD, two excellent minority teachers were pulled away by higher salaries in another district.

To help increase the applicant pool of minority teachers districts are developing non-traditional ways to recruit. For example, private citizens provide \$2,500 scholarships for local high school graduates who agree to earn a college degree and return to these districts to teach. BASD also partners with Penn State Lehigh Valley to help substitute teachers earn credits toward ESL certification, counting their hours teaching toward the state's pre-service requirements for certification. Two substitutes are currently working towards ELL certification in this program.

One of the difficulties of recruiting minorities into education, as noted by a BASD administrator, is that fact that few faculty in higher education are minority, thus the connection to teaching is broken when Latino/Hispanic students attend college. Another problem, noted by interviewees, is that regular education teachers lack the training and the skills needed to work with ELL students that have integrated into general education classes. Administrators in the BASD and ASD noted the need for general education teachers to have ELL training, develop more awareness about Latino cultures and formal training in differentiated instruction for non-English speakers. As most Latino/Hispanic students are enrolled in general curriculum, there is a need for their teachers to gain an understanding of the cultural difference of these students as they may influence learning and require a different pedagogical approach.

Recognizing these concerns, the BASD provided three days of training for teachers that focused on differentiated learning during the summer of 2007. To encourage training they also offer flex-time and hold training sessions during in-service days. However, because these specialized programs are not required, it was estimated that only about 20% of teachers have taken these specialized sessions. This is a particular concern at the secondary school level as it is believed that many senior teachers are not trained in differentiated instruction. As a result, district administrators are thinking about including differentiated teaching as part of induction training for newly-hired teachers.

ASD faces similar problems. In recent years, the ASD trained all high school teachers to work with ELL students. Teachers were also offered the opportunity to complete a certificate to work with English Language Learners. However, only 20 or so

current general education teachers have or are in the process of obtaining further certification. In general, several administrators in the ASD find that newly-hired general education teachers are not prepared to teach multicultural students, many of whom speak very little English. Because they are not properly trained, these teachers lack the cultural awareness to work successfully with all students, leaving some students to feel that they are being discriminated. “Teachers think that the fact that a student can’t read English is a long lasting deficit,” noted one ASD administrator. While teachers can call on ELL teachers to assist in classes, few take advantage of this service.

Extracurricular Opportunities

In addition to extracurricular opportunities available to all students regardless of race/ethnicity, the ASD and BASD have created specialized programs for minority students. In the BASD, the ASPIRE program is an after-school program targeting elementary and middle schools with a high number of at-risk students. ASPIRE ties academics with extracurricular activities, providing funding for enrichment and recreation. These programs are funded through the federal 21st Century Learning grant and include offerings such as poetry club, chess club, ballet, karate, soccer, Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, music and theater. Also, a few programs at the high school level, the Latino Leadership Club, Leaders of Tomorrow and Teen Summit target Latino/Hispanic students. The Latino Leadership Club is designed to build self-confidence, encouraging Latino/Hispanic students to get involved in other school activities. Leaders of Tomorrow focuses on job preparation including practicing how to interview for a job and social etiquette skills. Teen Summit provides a forum for at-risk students to address issues that students are facing in school and it also promotes diversity and leadership. In the BASD, several of the successful after-school programs that enroll Latino/Hispanic students have been cut or are receiving reduced funding due to the recent budget deficit.

The ASD also has a Latino Leadership Club at Allen and Dieruff high schools. Allen High School also has a Hispanic Honor Society and International Club, along with a Rotary Interact Club, which focuses on service and student diversity. In addition, Allen and Dieruff high school students can attend a Lehigh Carbon Community College summer program, which ties career training with education. However, even with these

opportunities available, it appears Latino/Hispanic students are not well represented in extracurricular organizations. Information was obtained on athletic participation by Latino/Hispanic students in the ASD. Of all high school athletes in 2006 about 37% were Latino/Hispanic; roughly the same proportion as White non-Hispanic students, and well below the overall percentage of Latino/Hispanic students in the district. The low participation rates may be due to a number of confounding factors. Latino/Hispanic high school students may be more likely to work after school or care for a younger sibling or grandparent. There are also some fees associated with sports. Many athletes play their sports off-season, in special clubs and leagues, outside of the district, which requires additional finances to gain the expertise needed to make a sports team.

At the preK-elementary level, in conjunction with the Allentown Library, ASD hosts a bilingual story hour. At this reading students take home a book in either English or Spanish. Elementary school ELL students also attend after school tutoring, which is focused on skills needed for testing. Middle school students are able to attend a program in conjunction with Kutztown University and Upward Bound.

EASD appears to offer fewer programs targeting Latino/Hispanic students, focusing more on multicultural programs. For example, while the EASD does not have a club targeting Latino/Hispanic students, per se, the Spanish club does include many of these students. Also at Easton Area High School, students can participate in an International Night, wearing costumes of their heritage and preparing and eating food from various countries. EASD counselors made an extra effort in recent years to attract minority students to a college fair, mailing personalized invitations to students inviting them to attend a college fair hosted by admissions counselors from small liberal arts colleges. Thanks to funding from state and federal sources, the Weed and Seed program provides family activities and programs for children in targeted neighborhoods of Allentown and Easton. These programs compliment school family nights and other school programs. The Latino Leadership Alliance of the Lehigh Valley also visits area high schools and provides information for students about college admission applications, financial aid applications and scholarships.

District Political Culture and Community Support

From our previous discussion of curricular and extracurricular opportunities, it appears that these three districts vary in the emphasis they place on programs and services targeting Latino/Hispanic students. This may be a function of budgetary constraints but may also be partly due to the cultural and political environment of the district community. In this section we consider the extent to which the larger community environment for Latino/Hispanic students affects their ability to learn.

Beginning in the BASD, particularly at the secondary level, it is believed by some administrators that there are low expectations in the community for minority students. The administrators interviewed work closely with schools to ensure that students, regardless of race or ethnicity, are placed in courses appropriate for their academic level. At times administrators have had to intervene to move minority students into more challenging programs. Moreover, it is felt that there is an element in the larger BASD community to maintain the status quo, to not support funding or programs that would advance minority students. Maintenance of tracking is one example. The idea behind “tracking” is that students are placed into defined academic levels within grades. Once a student is placed into a track it can be difficult to move out of the track. Students may be tagged with their tracking level for the duration of their academic experience at the secondary level. These administrators believe that minorities are generally placed into lower tracks, thereby not challenged to succeed beyond these limits.

Another concern mentioned by BASD administrators is the fact that many Latino/Hispanic students enrolled in the general education curriculum feel left out. They note that the “ELL program does a good job of looking out for kids in their program but the rest of Latinos may feel disenfranchised.” To help overcome these obstacles, high school counselors who are minorities, seek out minority students who may feel disconnected, to help them connect to the school community, gain trust in adults, and give them someone to relate to. However, it remains a challenge to get all guidance counselors, administrators and teachers to realize the needs of students from different cultures and socioeconomic situations. It is felt that many schools target everything from school parties to directions on how to order lunch, at a middle-class level, which may alienate minority students or students at a lower socio-economic level.

The feeling of disenfranchisement follows students home to family and care givers in the BASD. Students may be more comfortable communicating in English than their care givers, creating a situation in which the children become the “parent”, as they attempt to explain administrative procedures, assignments and communications from the school. While efforts are made to provide parental materials in Spanish, cultural differences may hinder a caregiver’s understanding of these communications, further alienating parents. These feelings were echoed by EASD administrators who feel that non-English speaking parents “shy away” from school involvement. It is felt by BASD district administrators that school administrators and staff need more “cultural competent skill training to know how to communicate with parents.”

To improve communication, six schools in BASD host Family Centers, which are funded through a combination of state grants and the United Way and provide a number of services for students and parents. In the EASD, parents can participate in ProJeCt of Easton, which provides services including GED preparation, early child care, and English language courses, free of charge. Also, translation services are provided for families through the TRANSACT program, which is a state online translation program. Financial education is also available in the EASD for parents and caregivers, through a partnership with Moravian College. For the first time in several years, the EASD held an ELL open house last school year, which was attended by over 200 people. This evening event provided information on EASD schools and services as well as information about community services. They are planning to host this event again this year.

In the ASD, administrators feel that the school directors and community are supportive of diversity issues the district faces. However, one administrator noted that they “do not do enough for their parents.” They also recognize the difficulty of parental involvement when many parents are not citizens and lack sufficient English language skills to communicate with teachers and administrators. The district administrators we spoke to highlighted the work of individual principals at Roosevelt ES, Central ES, and Jefferson ES, who work closely with families and the community to provide services and outreach. In the past they have held an evening for ELL parents to showcase their children’s writing. This program was such a great success, with over 200 in attendance that they hope to hold it again in the near future.

Suggested New Program and Instructional Changes

BASD administrators offered many recommendations to create a more culturally-sensitive and academically-challenging environment for Latino/Hispanic students. These include more culturally-based studies at the secondary level including Latin American studies; two-way bilingual programs, and more clubs and activities that are culturally focused such as African drummers, conga groups, more arts and intramurals that are culturally appropriate. They would also like to see more Latino/Hispanic students integrated into existing clubs such as bands and sports. Furthermore, they believe that in the BASD there is a need to improve communication about programs and opportunities for Latino/Hispanics. As activity fees are required for some sports programs or to rent a musical instrument, there is a need to reach out to the community to help to fund these materials, particularly in light of current budget cuts.

Administrators in the ASD suggested more effort to build a stronger link between parents and schools including more evening programs and services. They felt that the Parent Liaisons were a move in the right direction. Additionally, their greatest concerns focus on general education teachers. They would like to see more emphasis placed on staff development and hiring minority teachers.

In the EASD, one of the biggest challenges noted by administrators is transportation for after school activities. While there is a late bus at the high school, this bus leaves one hour after school ends. Thus, many students can not participate because they lack adequate transportation. EASD administrators also mentioned wanting to develop more mentoring programs like Upward Bound as well as more opportunities for parents to learn English – free of charge. Finally, they would like to see a special office at the administrative level for Latino/Hispanic students and parents.

Results: Student Survey

In this section we report findings from a survey of a non-random sample of Latino/Hispanic students in the ASD, BASD and EASD during Spring 2009. This survey was administered by members of the Latino Education Coalition to a small sample of ELL students.

As shown in Table 17, students in the BASD were less likely than the ASD and EASD to say that their school offers a variety of athletic and extracurricular activities of interest to the (48% vs. 80% in ASD and EASD). In the survey, students were asked to list their extracurricular activities. The array of options in the ASD was diverse and includes: drama, ROTC, rifle, drill, sports, band, Latino Leadership club, student government, Key club, art club, Spanish club. In BASD activities mentioned include

Table 17
Latino Student Survey Grades 9-12
2009

	ASD		BASD		EASD	
total respondents	10	10	32	32	32	32
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
My school offers a variety of athletic and extracurricular activities that are on interest to me	80%	20%	48%	52%	80%	20%
Are family responsibilities or finance an obstacle?	80%	20%	48%	52%	53%	47%
Do they (financial responsibilities) limit your participation?	40%	60%	29%	71%	23%	80%
Is transportation an obstacle for you?	50%	50%	48%	55%	47%	57%
Does your need/desire to work limit the amount of time you can participate?	20%	80%	39%	48%	33%	67%
I feel welcome in my school.	80%	20%	97%	3%	91%	9%
I feel I have a voice in my school.	60%	40%	46%	54%	64%	36%
My teachers/guidance counselors make me aware of extracurricular programs and educational opportunities.	56%	44%	80%	20%	61%	39%
My community offers a variety of athletic and extracurricular activities that are of interest to me.	43%	57%	46%	54%	50%	50%

participation on athletic teams, Leaders of Tomorrow, Honor society, dance, and band. EASD Latino/Hispanic students participate in various athletic teams as well as Honor Spanish society, Boy Scouts, and Japanese club, to name a few. When asked what extracurricular activities they would like at their schools, students in the ASD said they would like more outdoor activities, like soccer and lacrosse, as well as dance. In the BASD, students suggested step team, piano and guitar, computer club, more dances, and weight lifting. In the EASD, students mentioned dance team, volleyball for Hispanic girls, handball, boxing, step, guitar, skate boarding, mariachi, weight room access and an assembly for every culture and not just for African-Americans.

Next, students were asked whether financial responsibilities or finances limited their participation in after school activities. Eight out of 10 in the ASD said that finances did pose an obstacle to involvement in extracurricular activities. One factor related to finances is transportation, which is more likely to be an issue for students in EASD than finances, echoing the concerns of district administrators. In all districts, nearly 50% are limited by their lack of transportation. Further, about one third of students across the three districts said that work interfered with their ability to participate. Students in the BASD were most likely to say that work limited their participation, 39%, followed by Easton Area students (33%).

Overwhelmingly, Latino/Hispanic students feel welcome in their schools, particularly in the BASD, where 97% of respondents said yes. EASD was a close second at 91%. Students were able to provide comments related to this question. One satisfied student noted that he/she likes being at school because “they help you.” Of the few with negative feelings, one that did not feel welcome said that “Allen is so big”, another in the BASD said he/she “hated being here.” However, while students feel welcome, they are less likely to believe they have a voice in their schools. This is particularly true in the BASD where only 46% said they have a voice. In the ASD, only 60% said they have a voice and only 64% in the EASD. Students who did not feel they have a voice in the ASD said that “(they) only listen to popular kids”, that in the BASD their “school is overpopulated” and “the school doesn’t care what I say.” In the EASD, one student feels that “you can’t really express yourself.”

Results were mixed regarding counseling support, it appears from this sample that BASD students are more likely to feel that their teachers and counselors make them aware of extracurricular programs and educational opportunities (80%) compared to the EASD (61%) and ASD (56%). To better engage Latino/Hispanic students, survey respondents suggested in the ASD that more classes are offered, increased study groups, and scholarship programs. In the BASD, students suggested more discussion groups to help make the school better, more group activities, education about job opportunities, and allowing them to listen to music in school. In the EASD, information about college scholarships were mentioned by students as well as stopping racism, more tolerance programs, transportation after 5 p.m., more sports, and multicultural programs.

What survey respondents do not like about their schools and would like to change in the ASD include that they feel “some teachers should try to act better,” “lack of respect,” “teachers that don’t know what they are doing,” “too many fights at lunch,” “gangs,” and “fights.” In BASD, respondents mentioned “crowded hallways,” “racism,” “fights,” and the fact that “we’re not treated with the same respect.” In EASD, racism was again mentioned, as well as the fact that “teachers don’t want to move you up,” “teachers don’t allow me to speak Spanish,” “too big, too many people,” and “sometimes White people are paid attention to more.” These responses echo the concerns about school climate of ASD and BASD administrators.

If they could change anything about their school, students in ASD mentioned “more teachers of different races,” “changing the teaching styles of teachers,” that “the bad people that are there,” and “more diversity”. In BASD, responses include “the view the community has about Liberty,” “less people,” “diverse school programs and teachers,” “make it less racist,” and “times for classes.” In the EASD, respondents said, “having to wear IDs,” “not to give detention,” “more sport activities,” “to give awards to kids who work really hard but aren’t the best students,” and “I will like them to know that we are capable of a lot more than they think.”

Finally, students were asked a series of questions about their community. ASD students would like the community to “get more involved.” Also “take the kids off the streets,” and “teach us what we shouldn’t do.” They also mentioned more community projects and the need for motivation. These students are most concerned about poverty, that “people are not friendly,” “the shootings,” “racism,” and “theft.” If these students could change anything about their community it would be to “get kids more involved,” “make it safer” and “gangs.”

BASD students would like there to be “more activities for teens,” “programs that involve everyone in town,” “block parties,” and “better parks.” They do not like the “trouble with Liberty and Freedom,” “transportation,” “people outside think it’s bad,” “not enough help,” and that “people like to start trouble,” to name a few. Changes they would like to see in their community include transportation, diversity, getting rid of the drug problem, trash in the streets and activities for teens.

In the EASD, survey participants mentioned that their community needs “block parties,” “a place to go and learn about Latino history and culture,” “more programs for teens,” and “programs that will tell you about drinking or using drugs.” They are most troubled by gangs, drugs, fighting and “people thinking less of you because of your ethnicity.” They would like to make their community “cleaner,” with no curfew, to have more sports and activities, “peace in the streets,” and “less discrimination against Latinos.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

One of the most defining features of contemporary public education in the Lehigh Valley is the significant increase in the number of students of Hispanic origin that are attending local schools. Within the past decade schools in Northampton and Lehigh counties have seen their populations of Latino/Hispanic students grow to record levels, creating more racially and ethnically diverse classrooms, but also creating challenges in meeting the educational needs of changing student bodies. This report has highlighted many of the key issues that are facing both Latino/Hispanic students in the Lehigh Valley and the schools that are charged with providing quality education. As might be expected, generalizations about Latino/Hispanic students within an area as large and diverse as the Lehigh Valley are problematic. The experience of a Latino/Hispanic student within an urban district such as Allentown is undoubtedly very different than a Latino/Hispanic student in a suburban or rural district. Thus the report attempts to recognize district-level differences whenever possible.

It is important to note that over half of all Latino/Hispanic students in the Lehigh Valley attend schools in the Allentown School District. Additionally, in only Allentown are Latino/Hispanic students the majority racial group in the district. Thus any aggregate level statistics regarding Latino/Hispanic students in the Lehigh Valley will have a distinctly Allentown flavor. This effect is particularly noteworthy given the fact that the Allentown district has an especially high percentage of both English Language Learners and Latino/Hispanic students from low-income households.

Regardless of the school district, the challenges for Latino/Hispanic students to succeed begin in the classroom. Interviews in our two largest school districts suggest a

need for more awareness at the student and teacher levels of non-Western history and culture. Text and library books currently do not adequately cover the contributions of Latino/Hispanics throughout history. Many text are targeted towards a middle-class, White, non-Hispanic student body, which impedes comprehension of class material for other races and ethnicities. In addition, to concerns about instructional materials it appears that in some schools and school districts there is a negative climate toward those that are not White. A lack of cultural sensitivity at the school level discourages student participation in school and in after-school activities, which in turn may diminish interest in academic progress.

While school district personnel are aware of these issues, we suggest that they continue to be seek out curriculum and instructional materials that are sensitive to the demographics of the student body. Further, we suggest that districts continue to support staff development programs that enhance cultural diversity. Enhanced efforts to increase the awareness of teachers and the larger school community about different cultures could help build stronger school-family connections and enhance student success.

School districts also need to hire more minority teachers. While this is a persistent problem for many districts, ***we recommend increasing the level of non-traditional means of recruitment, particularly the small scale grant programs already begun in Allentown and Bethlehem Area.*** As the percentage of minority teachers increases it is likely that more cultural diversity will increase the desire for a more diverse curriculum and diverse learning opportunities.

In terms of academic performance Latino/Hispanic students in the Lehigh Valley have some distinct differences from their White, non-Hispanic counterparts. In general, Latino/Hispanic students lag behind other students in a number of important indicators of academic achievement. From lower SAT scores to sub-par graduation rates, the Valley's Latino/Hispanic students regularly perform at levels that lag behind district and regional averages. One of the biggest gaps between Latino/Hispanic students and their fellow students remains in the area of reading proficiency. Throughout both Northampton and Lehigh counties students of Latino/Hispanic origin perform substantially worse than district averages in reading ability, and lag considerably behind students of other racial

backgrounds in terms of proficiency on SAT verbal and writing sections. Because of the central place of reading and writing proficiency in the overall success of a student, the substandard outcomes pose a major challenge to area schools as they attempt to bolster success rates for their Latino/Hispanic students. Therefore, school districts must continue to focus on achieving basic reading and math competency for all students.

Within the larger picture of troublesome indicators of academic performance for the Lehigh Valley's Latino/Hispanic students are a number of positive signs of change. First, Latino/Hispanic students in the area are increasingly likely to take SAT exams. This finding is important because students of Latino/Hispanic origin pursue higher education at rates close to the general population. However, the increased interest in post-secondary education will not result in successful enrollment and matriculation without more prepared Latino/Hispanic students. As more local Latino/Hispanic students have taken the SAT exam the average scores for this group have slightly declined. Without increased attention and support for Latino/Hispanic students seeking to go on to college, there is a high probability that these student's goals will go unmet. There are opportunities at the secondary school level to better prepare students for these exams. ***Based on our findings, we recommend that school district staff increase their emphasis on college preparation for Latino/Hispanic students, including SAT prep classes and information workshops.***

Further, another positive trend is the degree to which Latino/Hispanic students are enrolling in two-year institutions of higher education. However, based upon PSSA and SAT results, there is concern that students are not prepared for the rigors of college. Thus two-year colleges must be ready to provide additional services and remedial classes to support student success. In addition, results suggest that fewer Latino/Hispanic students plan to enroll in a four-year college than other student groups. ***Therefore, we recommend that guidance personnel at the secondary level increase their level of assistance to Latino/Hispanic students concerning all higher education opportunities and work with these students and parents to complete college applications and financial aid forms.***

Additionally, the extent to which Latino/Hispanic students are undecided about their post-college plans suggests opportunities at the secondary level to inform students

about careers and job opportunities. ***We recommend that our local Workforce Investment Board, along with guidance office staff, increase information about career options and workforce trends for the non-college bound students.***

The trends and issues discussed in this report frame the current status of Latino/Hispanic education in the Lehigh Valley. Perhaps more importantly the study lays out some of the most significant challenges that will face both local school districts and their Latino/Hispanic students as they head into the second decade of the 21st century. Growth in populations of students of Latino/Hispanic origin within all local districts will require the attention of school administrators throughout the area. While all districts have and will experience growth in Latino/Hispanic students, the programs and policies to support these student's educational needs should not be seen as a "one size fits all" approach. The issues facing a Latino/Hispanic student in the Allentown district where a majority of students share their racial background are distinct from the relatively small population of Latino/Hispanic students in a more suburban district such as Nazareth Area. For the Allentown students some of the problems associated with cultural isolation may be minimized given their majority status, yet the problems posed by factors such as language barriers, transiency and limited resources create difficult barriers for Latino/Hispanic students. Conversely, students of Hispanic origin in the Southern Lehigh school district perform above average in measures of math and reading proficiency despite being a very small minority of the student population. Thus efforts to improve the overall educational experience of all Latino/Hispanic students must recognize the diverse circumstances in which these students are learning.

About the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium

The Lehigh Valley Research Consortium (LVRC) is a collaboration among academic researchers, governmental, not-for-profit, and business groups throughout the area, which has joined together to examine social, political, economic, health, and environmental issues in a regional context. The LVRC draws upon experts from local four and two year institutions of higher education in order to examine community issues, disseminate information about our community to citizens, engage in collective dialogue, and augment the classroom learning of our local college communities. This collaboration fosters new insights into regional challenges in the hopes of enhancing our understanding of complex issues and solutions.

Recognizing the intertwined nature of the region's communities, we have created a community-based information system, which is a compilation of over 300 indicators. By pulling together many facets of community well-being into one location, this information system creates an opportunity for richer, more productive conversations about our future direction, keeping in mind the unique nature of our diverse communities. Faculty researchers and college students work with community organizations to evaluate existing programs and policies as well as analyze current conditions to offer enhancements to existing policies and practices.

The LVRC is organized through the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges, a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information about the LVRC visit our website <http://www.lehighvalleyresearch.org>.

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