

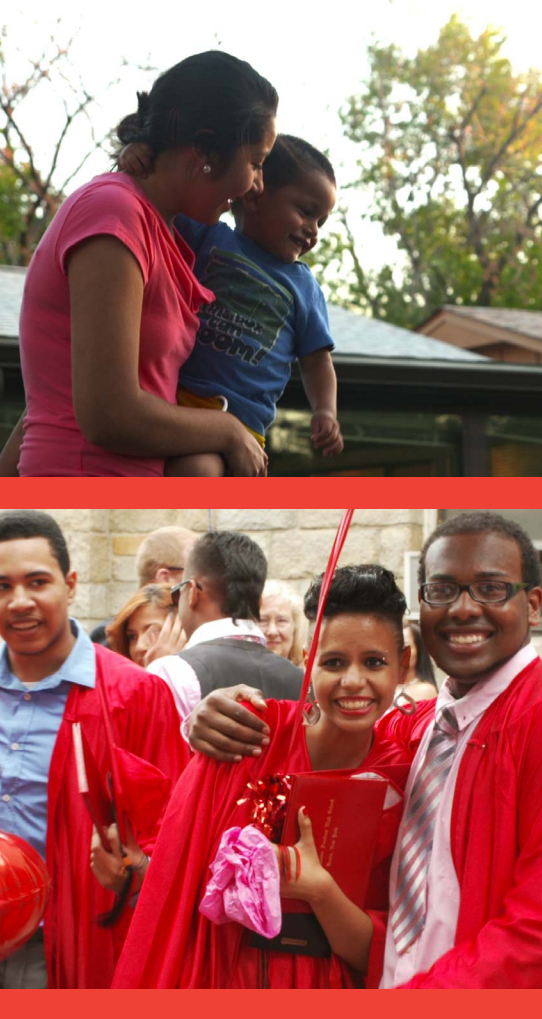


# THE GRADUATES LOS GRADUADOS

A FILM BY BERNARDO RUIZ

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# Introduction

"The future of this country will be determined by what happens in its schools. It's not just our democracy, it's our economy that's at stake. Latinos are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population, so in many ways we are going to see a Latino future. We can't allow differences related to language, culture, race, become an obstacle to doing what's in our national interest." - Pedro Noguera, Professor of Education, New York University

"This is not an individual struggle – it's a collective struggle." - Gustavo Madrigal, Graduate of Griffin High School.

Educational attainment among Latinos is paramount in an era when they are the largest racial and ethnic minority in the United States. Projected to make up a third of the population by 2050, Latinos are integrally engaged in the country's drive toward leadership, innovation, and growth.

Unfortunately, Latino students have historically faced legal, social, and economic obstacles to graduating from high school. High dropout rates among Latinos are caused by a complex set of factors related to unequal access to quality education, politics, economics, language, and geography. Furthermore, racism, discrimination, and immigration laws often make the road to graduation a difficult one.

There is reason to be hopeful: Recent studies show that the Latino high school graduation rate is on the rise, and more Latinos are applying for college than ever before. But there is still much work to be done. Most Latino graduates are the first generation in their families to receive higher education, and too often they don't make it to the finish line of earning a college degree.

## A public media commitment to education

American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen is a long-term public media commitment, made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), helping local communities identify and implement solutions to the high school dropout crisis. American Graduate demonstrates public media's commitment to education and its deep roots in every community it serves. Beyond providing programming that educates, informs and inspires, public radio and television stations – locally owned and operated – are an important resource in helping to address critical issues, such as the dropout rate.

In addition to national programming, public television and radio stations across the country have launched on-the-ground efforts, working with communities and at risk youth to keep students on-track to high school graduation. More than 1000 partnerships have been formed locally through American Graduate, and CPB is working with Alma and Colin Powell's America's Promise Alliance and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Independent Television Service (ITVS) is now engaged in an effort to support the American Graduate initiative by sharing documentaries that will inspire people and offer tools for effective community action to address and dramatically reduce high school dropout rates and ensure greater college success in the Latino community. Harnessing the power of film to spark dialogue and action, ITVS has curated a collection of independently produced documentaries that depict the challenging and inspiring lives of young Latinos as they struggle to get ahead in the American public school system, and ultimately prevail.

At the heart of ITVS's collection of independently produced documentaries is Bernardo Ruiz's film *The Graduates/Los Graduados*, which follows six Latino students as they encounter adversity and myriad obstacles, showing us how they succeed in spirit and action. The challenges they face on their path to high school graduation include gang involvement, undocumented status, bullying, teen pregnancy, harsh school discipline policies, and homelessness. Yet, with the support of their parents, teachers, and mentors, they hold on to their aspirations and graduate from high school.

It is our hope that these documentaries will bring together audiences through powerful stories about what's achievable when youth, parents, teachers, mentors, and leaders come together with one single vision: ensuring that young Latinos graduate.

# How to Use this Guide



Community Cinema is a rare public forum: A space for people who are connected by a love of stories to gather, engage in open-minded dialogue, and learn. Community Cinema represents and inspires a belief in people's power to change the world.

This discussion guide is designed as a tool to bring diverse audiences together, facilitate dialogue, and deepen understanding of the complex issues in the series *The Graduates/Los Graduados*. The guide is also an invitation to not only sit back and enjoy the film – but to step up and take action.

The target audience includes several groups:

- parents and caretakers
- educators
- afterschool program leaders
- business leaders
- policymakers
- community leaders
- youth

The complementary Youth Action Guide provides Latino youth strategies for peer education and organizing. The guide also encourages youth to find answers and solutions to dramatically reduce high school dropout rates.

Both guides are designed to work in tandem to facilitate intergenerational dialogue among youth, families, schools, and the community as they design campaigns and efforts to increase their local graduation rates. Combined, the Youth Action Guide and this Community Cinema Discussion Guide encourage viewers to think deeply about education in their communities and to become proactive in their quest for change in their communities.

Through these guides, ITVS provides suggestions for topics to be explored in panel discussions, schools, communities, and online. The guides also offer valuable resources and information about organizations striving to make a difference.



# From the Filmmaker

Many of us have heard the statement that Latinos are the youngest and fastest growing group of Americans. Yet all too often, this community is misrepresented—if represented at all. And rarely do we get to hear from Latino youth themselves. *The Graduates/Los Graduados*, a bilingual series focusing on the diverse experiences of Latina/o youth in high school, is a continuation of the documentary work I have done with my collaborators through Quiet Pictures since 2007. Our past projects have focused on stories of racial discrimination, immigration, and freedom of the press, with a common thread of representing struggles to achieve dignity and justice.

For this series, I teamed up with producers Pamela Aguilar, Katia Maguire and editor Carla Gutierrez (who I worked with on my last documentary, *Reportero*). All of us grew up in bilingual households. And three out of the four of us were born outside of the U.S. (Pamela in El Salvador, Carla in Peru and I, in Mexico.) I would argue that as filmmakers we were able to start the conversation with the students in the series at a deeper place than if we hadn't had the experience of coming to the U.S. as children or teenagers; or hadn't grown up in bilingual households.

As a team, we were interested in creating a series where Latina/o youth were at the center of the storytelling. In each hour of the series, we weave together three student narratives in which Latina/o youth themselves are the drivers of their own stories. Hour one deals with the experiences of three young Latinas and hour two examines the experiences of three young Latinos. The stories span six different school districts from across the country, in both urban and rural settings.

Through each individual story, we glimpse a larger structural issue such as poverty and inequality or a specific issue such as zero-tolerance policies in urban high schools or the banning of undocumented students from state universities. Rather than have an outside narrator tell us what to think about these issues, in *The Graduates*, Gustavo, Stephanie, Eduardo, Chastity, Juan and Darlene tell us about these and other challenges in their own words. When we do hear from outside voices, (writers, activists, elected officials) they are providing context or talking about their own experiences.

In the series, we also hear from parents, in most cases, speaking to us in Spanish. The parents are a key part of the narrative constellation of these stories—and if there is a recurring theme with the parent stories, it is one of sacrifice for their children. I attended a recent press event where a journalist wondered aloud if there was something in the culture of “Hispanic immigrant families” that didn't value education enough. I took a deep breath. I explained that all too often people confuse “culture” and economic reality. Of course, when parents are busy working long hours, or even more than one job, they do not have the same

amount of free time to support their children with homework help, or encouragement to attend extra-curricular activities. Where there are community resources, they are not always made accessible to Latino families, especially non English proficient families. Parents may want to help their children but often don't know where to turn.

The series celebrates projects and programs—and there are many others like them, not covered in this series throughout the country—started by dedicated teachers, community leaders or youth themselves, that seek to empower Latina/o youth. At the same time, the series illustrates the need for school administrators, legislators, community leaders, and others to put forth institutional and legislative advancements that will give Latino students the best possible opportunities to succeed in their education.

One key theme, running throughout the series is that students are successful when they have the opportunity to become involved in their schools and communities. It is crucial both that they have a say in their own futures, and that they have community partners and supporters ready to listen to them.





# The Series

There are many reasons why teens drop out of school or lose interest in pursuing an education. Some are decisions based on personal circumstances, while other reasons are the result of external factors. For each of the students featured in the *The Graduates/Los Graduados* documentary series, a specific problem or issue stood in the way of graduating.

The series highlights the urgent need for political action and structural change to the public education system in this country. Interviews with leading education reform advocates, journalists, writers, and scholars are woven throughout the two hours, providing perspective on the inequalities, lack of resources, and low expectations that plague the schools that many Latino students attend. The series provides a rare platform for six Latino

students to tell us in their own words about the challenges they have faced and how through their support networks they are defying the odds to graduate and, more importantly, to find their voice and become role models.

When we meet Darlene, Stephanie, Chastity, Eduardo, Gustavo, and Juan, we discover how gangs, immigration status, bullying, harsh school discipline policies, teen pregnancy, and homelessness interfere with their educational advancement. When we meet these young people, we also find out what programs, community groups, or mentors supported them.

The stories you will see offer invaluable lessons on perseverance, confidence, and trust. You will notice a web of people standing with and for these students.

## Hour 1 (Girls and Young Women)

*The Graduates/Los Graduados* consists of two one-hour films, each of which profiles three young people who dropped out of high school, or were in danger of dropping out. The first hour of the series tells the stories of three young women who faced the interruption – or potential interruption—of their high school education. Young Latinas face unique challenges on the road to graduation related to the intersection of their ethnicity and gender. Stereotypes that portray Latinas as submissive and underachieving often provoke a lack of confidence and low self-esteem. Many Latino families hold cultural expectations that girls should not venture far from home or family and should shoulder a stronger sense of family responsibility than boys. Caretaking duties, especially for younger siblings, often fall to girls. Latinas have the highest teen pregnancy rates in the country – almost twice the national average.

The girls shown in *The Graduates/Los Graduados* faced these challenges, but a combination of educational and community resources, as well as supportive families, helped each one surmount the obstacles that might have prevented her from completing her education.

### **Darlene Bustos - Tulsa, Oklahoma**

Just before her sophomore year of high school, Darlene became pregnant. The nausea she was experiencing during the early part of the semester made her miss a lot of school. Because of her frequent absences, the school finally asked her to leave. She had been seriously considering dropping out and now she felt her priority was being a full-time mother. She had grown up without her own father, who physically abused her mother, and sought the security of a relationship with Adrian, her son's father. But living with her son Alex and Adrian at Adrian's parents' house was not ideal. As Alex began attending Head Start, Darlene thought more about her son's future, and her own. She enrolled in the Union Alternative School program for at-risk students, where she began the work of finishing high school.

### **Stephanie Alvarado - Chicago, Illinois**

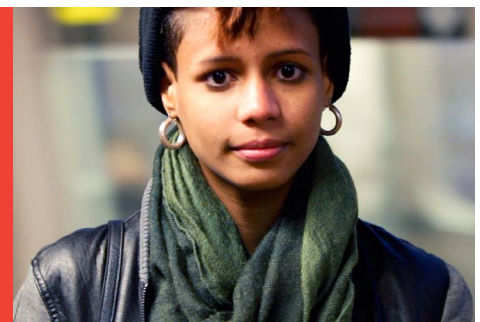
Stephanie lives with her parents – immigrants from El Salvador – and three brothers on the South Side of Chicago. Although she was an able student, Stephanie was weighed down by the tough reputation of her school. Gage Park High School is underresourced and the metal detectors students must pass



**Darlene Bustos**



**Stephanie Alvarado**



**Chastity Salas**

through to enter the school made her feel like her school was a prison. Stephanie became involved in Voices of Youth in Chicago Education, which aims to decrease the city's dropout rate through projects like *peer jury*, where students discuss and determine solutions for their peers who have committed a minor infraction (which without peer jury might result in suspension or expulsion). Not only did Stephanie's grades improve dramatically, but she also began participating in several activities: as a peer jury member at school, as an outspoken activist in support of Chicago teachers, and as part of a student group helping to build schools in Senegal.

#### **Chastity Salas – The Bronx, New York City, New York**

After her family – consisting of her mother and three younger brothers – became homeless, Chastity coped with the situation as well as she could, but her strong sense of responsibility toward her family threatened to interfere with her education. School staff recognized her problems and provided her with the support she needed to stay in school. Through the services of a Children's Aid Society Student Success Center coordinator, she was able to discuss personal issues as well as get the guidance she needed to complete college applications. Chastity began to thrive at school, using writing as an outlet for her feelings. Her family remained her top priority, even as she prepared to attend college. She inspires her younger siblings, who admire her perseverance and ability to make it to college..



**Eduardo Corona**



**Gustavo Madrigal**



**Juan Bernabe**

## Hour 2 (Boys and Young Men)

The young men featured in the boys' hour encountered personal or legal issues that threatened to block their path to a good education. With a combination of community and family support and their own determination, each one was able to find a program that helped him to remain in school and further his education.

#### **Eduardo Corona - San Diego, California**

Eduardo's parents brought him and his siblings from Mexico in hopes of getting them a good education. His sister and older brother became involved in gangs and Eduardo followed them down that path. While hanging out at the YMCA he met Chris, a recruiter for Reality Changers, which turned Eduardo's life around. Reality Changers is an organization that provides academic support, financial assistance, and leadership training for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to become first-generation college students. When Eduardo was arrested and facing six years in prison, Chris stood by him and challenged him to focus on his schoolwork. As a result, Eduardo brought up his grade point average and went on to college. Although he showed promise as an engineering student, Eduardo realized he liked

working with people and changed his major to psychology. He is now a Reality Changers counselor, serving as a role model and helping others like himself turn their lives around.

#### **Gustavo Madrigal - Griffin, Georgia**

Gustavo started school in the United States in fifth grade, after being brought from Mexico by his undocumented parents. They emphasized academics and set high standards, but Gustavo's undocumented status presented serious barriers to attending college. He finished high school and then worked for a time. While searching online for ways to get back to school, he stumbled upon information about the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. As an activist advocating for the DREAM Act, he learned about Freedom University and began attending its classes. Started by a group of academics in response to the ban on undocumented students attending the top five universities in Georgia, Freedom University offers courses to help students prepare for college work and helps them to apply and find scholarships.

### **Juan Bernabe - Lawrence, Massachusetts**

Juan came to the United States from the Dominican Republic with his mother at age 11. In his freshman year of high school, he came out as gay and was subject to bullying and verbal abuse by peers. Feeling isolated and discouraged, and afraid to confide in his mother, Juan was on the verge of dropping out. The performing arts program at Lawrence High School kept him in school. The program helped him gain confidence about his identity and eventually led him to be honest with his mother about his sexual orientation. The performing arts also helped him academically, since students in the program must keep their grades up in order to perform. Juan choreographed a prize-winning fox-trot in a dance competition and became a writer for the student newspaper.

### **Other Selected individuals featured in The Graduates/Los Graduados:**

Julián Castro, Mayor of San Antonio

Richard Blanco, Inaugural poet, 2013

Angy Cruz, Writer

Patricia Gandára, Co-Director of The Civil Rights Project, UCLA

Maria Teresa Kumar, CEO/President, Voto Latino

Pedro Noguera, Professor of Education, NYU

Angy Rivera, Undocumented advice columnist for New York State Youth Leadership Council

Luiz J. Rodriguez, Writer

Claudio Sánchez, Education correspondent, NPR

Wilmer Valderrama, Actor

Antonio Villaraigosa, Mayor of Los Angeles, 2005 – 2013

### **Darlene's story**

Sara Benitez, Darlene's mother

Richard Storm, Principal, Union Alternative School

### **Chastity's story**

Brunilda Roman, Chastity's mother

Nicholas Salas, Chastity's brother

Emily Task, Student Success Center Coordinator, Children's Aid Society

### **Stephanie's story**

Salvador Alvarado, Stephanie's father

Joel Rodriguez, Organizer, Voices of Youth in Chicago Education

Andrea Knowles, Assistant Principal, Gage Park High School (2010 – 2012)

### **Eduardo's story**

Fausto Corona, Eduardo's father

Alex Corona, Eduardo's brother

Christopher Yanov, Founder and President, Reality Changers

### **Gustavo's story**

Lorgia Garcia-Peña, Co-Founder, Freedom University

### **Juan's story**

Ana Irma Perez, Juan's mother

Quity Morgan, Dance Department

Ricardo Rios, Editor, *What's Good in the Hood*





# Documentary Shorts



These five short films are part of a public media initiative supported by CPB to help local communities across America find solutions to address the dropout crisis. *Can't Hold Me Back*, *I Really Want to Make It*, *Immigrant High*, *Baby Mama High* and *Skipping Up* collectively showcase a diverse array of determined Latino adolescents, from Oakland to Detroit, New York to San Antonio, who have all struggled to overcome challenges – gang violence, drugs, poverty, young motherhood, and language barriers – as they keep their eyes on the prize: a high school diploma.

## ***Skipping Up*** by Jim Mendiola



***Skipping Up*** follows a group of eighth graders in San Antonio as they finish their year in the Middle School Partners Program, a successful dropout-prevention project that has generated national interest as a model for schools with significant Latino populations.

## ***I Really Want to Make It*** by Ray Telles

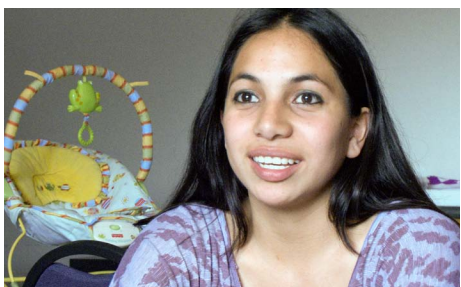
Sharon Montano of Oakland decides to go back to school at age 20 after several years of substance abuse and other struggles. When she discovers Civicorps Academy, she finally gets another shot at a high school diploma – and a future.



## ***Can't Hold Me Back*** by Betty Bastidas

***Can't Hold Me Back*** follows Detroit teen Fernando Parraz as he overcomes a mountain of roadblocks to become the first in his family to earn a high school diploma – his ticket out of the struggles of inner-city poverty and violence.

## ***Baby Mama High*** by Heather Ross

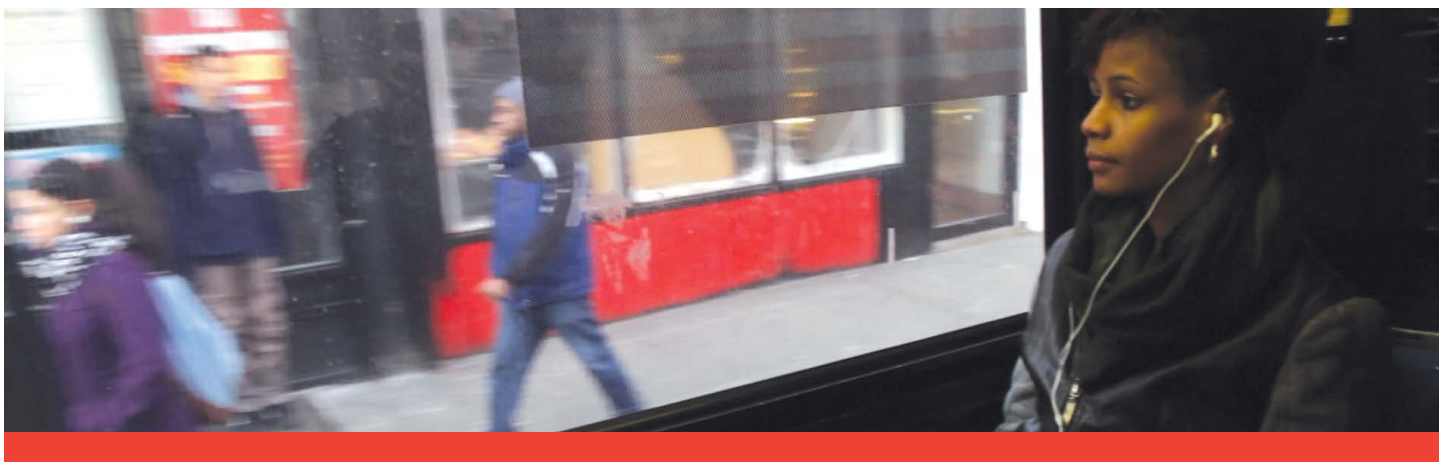


It's the last few weeks of high school for Yessenia, a soft-spoken senior with two small daughters and a boyfriend who'd rather she stay at home than go to school. Yessenia is forced to choose: stand up for herself and her daughters, or give in to expectation.

## ***Immigrant High*** by Xochitl Dorsey



Immigrant teens face discrimination, language barriers, unfamiliar cultural traditions – all while dealing with the changes all teens struggle with. Many give up on school. ***Immigrant High*** takes us into the halls of Pan American International High School in Queens, New York, a school that aims to give its Latino students a place to belong and excel.



# Background Information

## Latinos in the United States

The Latino population in the United States is young and growing fast. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of Latinos in the U.S. population increased by 43 percent and now constitutes the nation's largest ethnic minority. The Latino birth rate outpaces that of both non-Latino whites and African Americans and this demographic change has enormous political and economic implications for the country. Like others before them, Latinos have come to the United States in search of economic well-being and a better life for their children. Many work long hours in menial jobs as they gain a foothold in this country. But it is a mistake to see Latinos as only occupying the lowest rungs of the societal and economic ladder. The immigration debate in the United States, while focused on issues of border security and illegal entry, also has shed a light on the many Latinos who occupy leadership roles in business, politics, academia, the arts, and other fields. In spite of their many success stories, however, significant gaps remain in educational attainment.

### Sources:

- » [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/22/pew-report-young-latinos\\_n\\_1293532.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/22/pew-report-young-latinos_n_1293532.html)
- » [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/17/minorities-birth-rate-now-surpass-whites-in-us-census\\_n\\_1523230.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/17/minorities-birth-rate-now-surpass-whites-in-us-census_n_1523230.html)
- » <http://www.statista.com/statistics/241514/birth-rate-by-ethnic-group-of-mother-in-the-us/>
- » <http://latinbusinesstoday.com/2013/06/the-latino-immigrant-advantage/>

## Voting Power

Of the 50.5 million Latinos in the United States, 13 million are registered voters; 8.3 million are eligible but unregistered. Of the 46 million young people (aged 18-29) eligible to vote in 2012, 16.7 percent were Latino.

While Latinos tend to vote Democratic, in elections since 1992 about 25 percent of the Latino vote has been undecided, and the biggest proportion of those undecided votes are first-time young voters. Latinos play an especially crucial role in Congressional

elections in Western and Southwestern states with large Latino populations.

### Sources:

- » <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-20153941>
- » [http://americasvoiceonline.org/press\\_releases/new\\_census\\_results\\_confirm\\_growing\\_power\\_of\\_latino\\_vote/](http://americasvoiceonline.org/press_releases/new_census_results_confirm_growing_power_of_latino_vote/)
- » <http://www.civicyouth.org/quick-facts/youth-demographics/>

## Demographics of the Latino Youth Population

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, never before in this country's history has a minority ethnic group made up so large a share of the youngest Americans. By force of numbers alone, the kinds of adults these young Latinos become will help shape the kind of society America becomes in the 21st century:

- Latinos make up about 18 percent of all youths in the United States aged 16 to 25.
- Two-thirds of Hispanics aged 16 to 25 are native-born Americans.
- Roughly 22 percent of all Latino youths aged 16 to 25 are unauthorized immigrants.
- Latinos are the largest minority population in the United States and the youngest. Their median age is 27, compared with 31 for blacks, 36 for Asians, and 41 for whites. One-quarter of all newborns in the United States are Latino.

### Source:

- » <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/12/11/between-two-worlds-how-young-latinos-come-of-age-in-america/>

## Educational Attainment among Latinos – by the Numbers

During the 20 years from 1998 to 2008, Latinos made the largest improvement of any group in **high school completion**; yet, their graduation rate is the lowest compared to other groups:

- Asian Americans – 91 percent
- Whites – 88 percent
- African Americans – 78 percent



- **Latinos – 71 percent**

Between 2000 and 2011, the *high school dropout rate* among Latino youths has gone down by half:

- **Latinos – from 28 to 14 percent**
- African Americans – from 13 to 7 percent
- Whites – from 6 to 5 percent
- Asian Americans – not available

In 2012, the percentage of recent Latino high school graduates immediately *going on to college* reached a record 69 percent. This represented a higher growth rate than that of either whites or African Americans. Group increases in college enrollment between 2000 and 2008 were as follows:

- Asian Americans – 82 to 84 percent
- **Latinos – 49 to 69 percent**
- Whites – 64 to 67 percent
- African Americans – 57 to 63 percent

Although Latinos have experienced the largest gains in college enrollment in recent years, they are less likely than other groups to enroll in a four-year college and less likely to be enrolled full-time:

***Four-year college enrollment:***

- Asian Americans – 79 percent
- Whites – 72 percent
- African Americans – 66 percent
- **Latinos – 56 percent**

***Enrolled full-time:***

- Asian Americans – 91 percent
- Whites – 85 percent
- African Americans – 85 percent
- **Latinos – 78 percent**

Among all groups, Latinos have the lowest rate of *completion of a bachelor's degree*:

- Asian Americans – 38 percent
- Whites – 22 percent
- African Americans – 12 percent
- **Latinos – 11 percent**

Studies have shown that the Latino students with the highest level of college success are those whose parents are highly engaged with their college career, or who have siblings who have attended college. There is a growing number of colleges with significant Latino student enrollment that focus on parent engagement as a key strategy – providing information about how the college experience differs from high school, and providing

information about financial aid and academic and other support services available to students.

**Sources:**

- » <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Racial-Disparities-Gender-Gaps-Student-Achievement-Higher-Education.aspx>
- » <http://www.pewhispanic.org/>
- » <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/05/09/hispanic-high-school-graduates-pass-whites-in-rate-of-college-enrollment/>
- » <http://chronicle.com/article/All-Together-the-Role-of/129100/>





# Barriers and Success Strategies

*Note: The Success Strategies touched upon in the following sections reflect strategies highlighted through the stories of the youth featured in The Graduates/Los Graduados and is not meant to be an exhaustive overview of models being used to address the complex issues presented here.*

## Girls and Young Women

**Darlene Bustos - Tulsa, Oklahoma**

**Barrier: Teen Pregnancy**

The good news is that teen pregnancy rates have dropped dramatically since their high point in the 1990s, the overall rate declining 42 percent between 1990 and 2008. Among Latina teens the rate decreased 34 percent over this same period. However, while the pregnancy rate among Latina teens is slightly lower than the rate among black teen girls (107 compared to 117), it is over twice as high as the rate for non-Latina white teen girls.

The 1990 through 2008 data show that 44 percent of Latina teens became pregnant at least once before age 20 – nearly twice the national average. Teen pregnancy has adverse effects for both mother and child. Teen mothers tend to drop out of school; only about 50 percent receive a high school diploma by the age of 22, compared to about 90 percent of women who did not give birth during adolescence. Teens who get pregnant

- are less likely to get support from the biological father
- are more likely to be single parents
- are more likely to live in poverty: More than 75 percent of teen mothers need welfare within five years of having their baby

While many children of teen parents do get the support they need to thrive, statistically many of them are likely to

- have lower school achievement and drop out of high school
- have more health problems
- be incarcerated at some time during adolescence
- give birth as a teenager
- face unemployment as a young adult

There is a movement to overcome the stigma involved with being a teen parent – especially for girls who return to school after having their baby. Teen pregnancy prevention initiatives are often based on the premise that teen parenting is a strictly negative circumstance and should be avoided at all costs. As a result, teen moms are consistently viewed as failures and victims. The National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health has launched a campaign that, instead of focusing on stigma as a way to discourage teen parenting, pushes for more attention to challenges that too many young mothers face – things like

poverty, lack of access to health care, and closed-off educational opportunities, all of which the group says are to blame for the negative outcomes associated with teen parenting.

### Sources:

- » <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/FB-ATSRH.html>
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- » [http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/05/teen\\_pregnancy\\_prevention\\_and\\_stigma.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/05/teen_pregnancy_prevention_and_stigma.html)

**WOMEN  
& GIRLS  
LEAD**

**The Graduates/Los Graduados** is a featured program of Women and Girls Lead, a public media campaign using documentary films to showcase extraordinary women and girls who are changing the world. In collaboration with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), public television and media partners, ITVS seeks to engage audiences and spark activities that promote leadership development, violence prevention, and economic empowerment.

[www.womenandgirlslead.org](http://www.womenandgirlslead.org)

### Success Strategy: Dual-Generation Education Programs

One of the biggest challenges for teen mothers is continuing their education while also having to care for a young child. *Dual-generation strategies* refers to an approach in which children participate in high-quality early education (PreK-3), while their parents participate in programs to develop their job skills or attend classes to complete or further their own education. Rather than targeting the needs of children and parents separately, dual-generation strategies provide comprehensive, coordinated services that benefit the whole family simultaneously.





Research data have consistently shown that children's preparation for academic success when they enter school is related to the mother's education level. When mothers increase their education level, it can have a powerful influence on their children. At the same time, as was shown in the film, when their young children participate in early-childhood programs, parents can find a new interest in their own education. Two programs serve as good examples of the dual-generation approach:

*Jeremiah Program* (<http://www.jeremiahprogram.org/>) is a nationally recognized program that provides the support necessary for low-income single mothers and their children to move beyond poverty and into a life of economic independence. With a combination of safe, affordable housing; quality early-childhood education; parenting and life skills development; high standards for pursuit of postsecondary education; and support for full-time, career-track employment, Jeremiah Program stabilizes families, educates two generations, builds social capital, and works to end the need for public assistance. The program has fully operational sites in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota (where its campuses serve more than three hundred residents at any given time), as well as Austin, Texas, and is looking to expand to other communities.

*CAP (Community Action Project) Tulsa* (<http://captulsa.org/>) is the largest antipoverty agency in Oklahoma. CAP Tulsa partners with Family and Children Services and collaborates with other social service agencies to provide family support, parent education, crisis intervention, and family counseling services. CAP Tulsa's CareerAdvance® program is a work-readiness program that offers coaching, education, training, and job opportunities for low-income parents, with a focus on recipients with young children. One of the few organizations in the country working with parents and children simultaneously to increase family economic stability, CAP Tulsa offers both home-based and center-based early-childhood education.

#### Sources:

- » <http://fcd-us.org/our-work/prek-3rd-education/dual-generation-strategy>
- » <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/blog/entry/early-childhood-and-maternal-education-time-to-bring-two-generations-together>

### Stephanie Alvarado - Chicago, Illinois

#### Barrier: Zero Tolerance Policies

*Zero tolerance* refers to a school policy of punishing any infraction of a rule, regardless of mistakes, ignorance, or extenuating circumstances. Such policies arose in the 1990s as a method of keeping drugs and weapons out of schools. Over time, however, zero tolerance expanded to cover even relatively minor infractions, but with the same harsh consequences, including suspension or expulsion.

According to the National Association of School Psychologists, "Research indicates that, as *implemented*, zero tolerance policies are ineffective in the long run and are related to a number of negative consequences, including increased rates of school dropout and discriminatory application of school discipline practices." Thus, rather than creating a safe learning environment, zero tolerance policies cause specific harms:

- Removing students from the learning environment separates them from educational services and instruction.
- Expulsion or frequent or long-term suspension makes students fall further behind academically and puts them at risk of dropping out completely or becoming involved in criminal activity in the community. Because zero tolerance policies are often applied for relatively minor infractions, a student's separation from school can often be the first step in the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Zero tolerance has resulted in the disproportionate punishment of black and Latino students. With the increasing presence of police in schools, disciplinary issues are more frequently being referred to the juvenile justice system, making these students especially primed for the school-to-prison route.

#### Sources:

- » [http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/zt\\_fs.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/zt_fs.aspx)
- » [http://www.educationrightscenter.org/Zero\\_tolerance.html](http://www.educationrightscenter.org/Zero_tolerance.html)

#### Success Strategy: Peer Juries

Although zero tolerance continues to be a popular policy among many school administrators and teachers, some schools have adopted a nonpunitive approach to handling disciplinary matters.

Studies of various nonpunitive programs show that these are far more effective than the harsher methods of suspension and expulsion in changing behavior and improving school discipline. These programs take a variety of forms, including character education classes, specific behavioral supports for students at risk for violent behavior, and schoolwide programs that focus on student accountability, restitution, and the development of positive relationships. The peer jury falls into the latter category as an approach that has proven to be effective at reducing school discipline problems. Having to explain your behavior to a panel of fellow students combines the force of peer pressure with a personal examination of transgressions to eliminate a problem behavior.

In addition to the example highlighted in the film, other schools have had success with the peer jury approach:

In *Los Angeles County*, 17 high schools participate in a system of teen peer courts (<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Justice/2010/0413/Teen-juries-put-a-new-spin-on-juvenile-justice>) that hear cases involving misdemeanor offenses. A jurist from the Los Angeles Superior Court presides, student volunteers from local law schools advise the jurors on points of law, and community mentors monitor the defendants' compliance with the sentences. Court convenes every two weeks after school and the session lasts for about three hours. Unlike in a court of law, teen jurors can question victims, parents, and others, which often has a cathartic effect on all concerned. Reports indicate that a very low number reoffend, and if defendants follow the teen court's orders, the charges against them are dismissed.

At *Manual High School in Peoria, Illinois* (<http://www.peoriamagazines.com/ibi/2011/jul/different-kind-jury-duty>), peer juries have been adopted as a way to keep youth out of juvenile detention centers. The program, set up by Illinois Models for Change and the Children's Home Association of Illinois, uses the philosophy of restorative justice in its proceedings. Restorative justice is a process that brings everyone together – victim, offender, anyone else affected by the offense, and the impartial jurors – to discuss the situation and decide what actions to take. The dean of students refers cases to the jury, making sure that the cases deal with behaviors considered appropriate for the students to handle. Through their questioning, the jurors often uncover underlying issues that help explain the offending behavior.

### **Chastity Salas – The Bronx, New York City, New York** **Barrier: Homelessness and Poverty**

Government statutes define a homeless person as one who lacks a “fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence.” It includes people who spend nights in shelters or who live in places such as abandoned buildings. For children, the definition expands to include youth and children who “are sharing the housing of other

persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.”

On any given night in the United States, there are approximately six hundred and thirty thousand people who are homeless. Of those, about one hundred and forty thousand (22.2 percent) are children, sixty-two thousand (9.8 percent) are veterans, and two hundred and seventy thousand (42.9 percent) are disabled and unable to work. Looking at the figures another way, of the homeless population, 239,403 are people in families and 394,379 are individuals. Slightly fewer than 16 percent of the homeless are considered *chronically homeless*.

Homelessness and poverty are inextricably linked. According to *The State of Homelessness in America 2013*, a report from the National Alliance to End Homelessness, between 2010 and 2011, the national poverty rate increased from 15.3 percent to 15.9 percent. This translates to more than 48 million people living in poverty in 2011. More than one-half of the households living in poverty were family households with a single adult – most often the mother – present. The number of these households increased by almost 6 percent between 2010 and 2011.

The spate of recent foreclosures, the inability of single mothers to support a family with low-wage jobs, a lack of affordable rental housing, and the declining value of public assistance are all factors contributing to homelessness in the United States today.

More Latino children are living in poverty – 6.1 million in 2010 – than children of any other racial or ethnic group. This marks the first time in U.S. history that the single largest group of poor children is not white. In 2010, 37 percent of poor children were Latino, 30.5 percent were white, and 26.6 percent were black. In 2010, Latino children who lived in families headed by single mothers had the highest poverty rate – 57.3 percent. Latino





children in families with an unemployed parent also had one of the highest poverty rates overall – 43.5 percent in 2010. By contrast, just 8.7 percent of Latino children in families with a college-educated parent lived in poverty in 2010.

**Sources:**

- » [http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/snapshot\\_of\\_homelessness](http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/snapshot_of_homelessness),
- » <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/>
- » <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/11/08/hispanic-poverty-rate-highest-in-new-supplemental-census-measure/>
- » <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/09/28/childhood-poverty-among-hispanics-sets-record-leads-nation/>

**Success Strategy: Community Schools/Children's Services**

One strategy for helping homeless students succeed in school is to organize the necessary resources through a community school. Working in partnership with other community organizations, the school can become a center open to everyone, evenings and weekends, all year. This is especially important to homeless children and young people, who frequently report that school, because it is a familiar and predictable environment, is a home to them. By integrating academics, counseling, and health services, the school improves student learning and strengthens families and communities.

## Boys and Young Men

**Eduardo Corona - San Diego, California**

**Barrier: Gang Involvement**

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, gang problems declined between the mid-1990s and early 2000s, but since 2002 there has been a 25 percent increase in the number of jurisdictions reporting gang activity. Adolescent gang members tend to belong to *street gangs* rather than to more structured organized crime gangs, and are involved in crimes such as robbery, assault, gun crimes, and street-level drug distribution. Between 1996 and 2011 the ethnicity of gang members has held fairly steady. The most recent figures from law enforcement show that 46 percent of gang members are Hispanic/Latino, 35 percent are African American, approximately 11 percent are white, and 8 percent are other ethnicities. In both large and small cities and in suburban counties Hispanics/Latinos constitute the largest percentage of gang members.

Multiple risk factors are predictive of a young person's joining a gang. Among these are prior delinquent behavior, family issues, low academic achievement and/or lack of interest in school, association with violent or delinquent peers, and living in a poor neighborhood where drugs and firearms are readily available. As social and economic conditions create isolation for youth in certain areas, gangs become attractive to some of them because

*The Oakland (California) Unified School District* (<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/06/linking-home-and-classroom-oakland-bets-on-community-schools/276858/>) is turning to the community school model in order to improve student safety and achievement. Having lost more than sixteen thousand students since 2000, the school district is attempting to turn things around by making all 87 of its schools into full-service community schools, with staff who can support students' social, emotional, and health needs as well as their academic growth. The push to reinvent itself makes Oakland unique. In most places, only individual schools adopt this model. Oakland's goal is to transform the entire district.

*Elev8* is a community school initiative that focuses on the middle school years, which have been identified as a time of critical transition for young people. The initiative is in place in four areas: Chicago, Illinois (five schools), Baltimore, Maryland (four schools), Oakland, California (five schools), and New Mexico (five schools). The particulars of Elev8 differ at each location, based on local solutions to local needs. But in all the participating schools, Elev8 provides integrated high-quality services to students and families, and aims to ensure that by the time students finish eighth grade, they are prepared for high school and go on to graduate.



of the perceived “benefits” derived from membership: a sense of power and prestige, a feeling of family, and protection afforded by the gang. As some studies argue, gangs represent an alternative identity to youth who are otherwise on the periphery of society due to structural and personal circumstances. As author and former gang member Luis J. Rodriguez explains in the film, “I think the key elements for a lot of kids like us [joining a gang] were being rootless, [and] feeling powerless and futureless.”

**Sources:**

- » <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ#q15>
- » <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Survey-Analysis/Demographics>,
- » <http://www.bcps.org/offices/sss/pdf/Preventing-Gang-Involvement.pdf>

### **Success Strategy: Mentorship and Violence Prevention**

An effective approach to mitigating the risk factors that can lead to gang membership is mentoring a young person. Studies reported by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership have provided strong evidence of the success of mentoring programs in reducing the incidence of delinquency, substance use, and academic failure. A caring, reliable, and experienced adult can provide the support a young person needs in order to successfully navigate not only the relatively mundane day-to-day issues of adolescence but also the larger issues such as conflict with parents or teachers, completing school assignments, and the allure of drugs or criminal activity. Two exemplary programs show how effective mentoring can be:

*Cure Violence* (<http://cureviolence.org/>) is a Chicago-based program that uses a public health approach to stopping the spread of violence. Its strategy has three parts: It deploys “violence interrupters” – former gang members, drug dealers, and violent offenders – who use a variety of conflict mediation techniques to prevent imminent violence; it employs a strong outreach component in which outreach workers serve as mentors to a caseload of participants to change the norms and behavior of high-risk clients; and through public education, community events, and community responses to every shooting, it works to change community norms that accept violence as appropriate.

*Homies Unidos* (<http://homiesunidos.org/>) was formed in El Salvador to find ways to reduce the violence that plagues certain communities. Since 1997, the organization has been working in Los Angeles to promote peace through gang prevention, the promotion of human rights in immigrant communities, and the empowerment of youth through positive alternatives to gang involvement and destructive behavior. To achieve its goals it uses a four-pronged approach that includes education to help nonactive gang members reintegrate into their communities, Family Wellness Workshops to build mutual understanding between parents and children, grassroots political advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable communities, and intervention to curtail the troubles of at-risk youth by members who themselves were once at-risk.

#### **Sources:**

- » <http://www.mentoring.org/>
- » <http://www.childtrends.org/?publications=mentoring-a-promising-strategy-for-youth-development>

### **Gustavo Madrigal - Griffin, Georgia**

#### **Barrier: Limited Rights for Undocumented Students**

The number of undocumented students is difficult to ascertain, but researchers estimate that there are now 1.8 million undocumented children in the United States. Although their status can limit their access to higher education, undocumented students do have certain rights through 12th grade.

In 1982, the Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe* that undocumented children, who are illegally in the United States through no fault of their own, are entitled to the same K-12 educational opportunities as children who are citizens or legal residents. The opportunities and rights of undocumented students include

- the right to enroll in a public school;
- the right to free and reduced-price meals, special education services, and school-sponsored events and activities;
- the right to transfer to another school or receive tutoring;
- the right to quality English instruction.

In addition, parents have the right to receive easy-to-understand information from the school, to review disciplinary actions imposed by the school, and to review their children’s grades.

Under federal law, school districts or their employees are not required to report undocumented students to immigration authorities, since this would violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Federal law does not prohibit undocumented students from attending U.S. colleges or universities, but they encounter other obstacles in seeking higher education. In 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) gave states the authority to decide how they would handle the provision of in-state tuition to undocumented students seeking admission to public institutions. The ambiguous language of IIRIRA has resulted in various legal interpretations of the law. Most states do not allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition and they are not eligible for most federal loans, financial aid, and scholarships. There are, however, other sources of funding, such as those provided by private or nonprofit scholarship funds that can be accessed for education. Ensuring that these resources are known and accessible to students is essential. In addition, providing support and guidance to students so that they know how to apply for these funds is equally important.

Some states have passed, or are considering, laws making it illegal to be undocumented, and some states, such as Georgia and Virginia, bar undocumented students from applying to top state schools. Of the sixty-five thousand undocumented students who have lived in the United States for five years or more and graduate from high school each year, only about 5 to 10 percent actually attend college.

Most states have an unstipulated policy that does not explicitly state whether or not colleges and universities can admit undocumented students and offer in-state tuition (about two-thirds of states have this policy – or lack thereof). This means that in a majority of states, the decision to admit undocumented students is left up to the individual college or institution. This also varies greatly depending on whether or not the college or

university is private or public. Oftentimes, college or university administrators (and high school counselors) are uncertain of what to do and what they can do in a state with an unstipulated policy. They often fear public backlash for coming out in support of undocumented students. Here is a list of state policies: <http://www.nasfaa.org/undocumented-map/>.

**Sources:**

- » [http://www.nassp.org/Content.aspx?topic=Undocumented\\_Students](http://www.nassp.org/Content.aspx?topic=Undocumented_Students)
- » [http://www.energyofanation.org/sites/25e1f498-741c-478a-8a08-aa486d8533a5/uploads/Undocumented\\_Students\\_\\_National\\_.pdf](http://www.energyofanation.org/sites/25e1f498-741c-478a-8a08-aa486d8533a5/uploads/Undocumented_Students__National_.pdf)
- » <http://www.newfuturo.com/articles/undocumented-students-and-their-parents-have-rights-too?id=undocumented-students-and-their-parents-have-rights-too>

**Success Strategy: Scholarships and Opportunities for Undocumented Students**

Undocumented students can now take advantage of a program that allows many of them to find employment and take further steps toward advancing their education. In 2012, President Obama announced that the Department of Homeland Security had established the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* (DACA) program, which gives eligible young people a two-year reprieve from deportation proceedings. It grants them work authorization and affords them time to explore educational opportunities. To qualify, they must have come to the United States before the age of 16; have continuously resided in the United States for at least the last five years; have graduated from high school, obtained a GED, or been honorably discharged from the U.S. military; and not have a criminal record. Of the 1.7 million young unauthorized immigrants eligible for DACA, some 85 percent are Latino. Funding assistance is available from several sources to cover the DACA application fee, along with practical guidance on steps to take when DACA approval is granted (see the “Resources” section).

One of the first to hire a DACA-authorized employee is Rep. Luis V. Gutiérrez (D-IL), who hopes others in Congress will follow his example. The young man who Gutiérrez hired to work in his district office in Chicago is an undocumented immigrant from Mexico, brought to Chicago by his parents at the age of 6.

**Source:**

- » <http://gutierrez.house.gov/press-release/rep-gutierrez-hires-deferred-action-recipient-chicago-office>



Most regulations relating to higher education are made at the state level, so students planning to go to college need to learn how a particular state's laws pertain to them. Currently there are 13 states that allow students to qualify for in-state tuition regardless of their immigration status: Texas, California, Utah, New York, Washington, Illinois, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Maryland, and Connecticut. If Congress passes the DREAM Act, more funding opportunities may open up for undocumented students who are working their way toward citizenship. At present, all scholarship money available for undocumented students comes from private sources; information is available in the “Resources” section.

**Sources:**

- » <http://www.dreamactivist.org/apply-univision-offers-scholarship-undocumented-students-deadline-fast-approaching/>
- » <http://www.chooseyourfuture.org/college/undocumented-students>
- » [http://e4fc.org/images/E4FC\\_TheCase.pdf](http://e4fc.org/images/E4FC_TheCase.pdf)

**Juan Bernabe - Lawrence, Massachusetts**

**Barrier: Bullying**

Stories of young people taking their own lives after being bullied have become all too familiar in recent years, and by all accounts, bullying remains a big problem in the nation's schools. The National Association of School Psychologists defines a *bully* as “someone who directs physical, verbal, or psychological aggression or harassment toward others, with the goal of gaining power over or dominating another individual.”

Targets of bullying are usually individuals who are “different,” often based on race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or perceived sexual orientation. Bullying is more common among boys than girls and far more prevalent in school than anywhere else. Fear of being bullied is the reason about 15 percent of all students give for not showing up at school, and about 1 in 10 students drops out or changes schools because of repeated bullying.

The latest data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that the rate of reported bullying was unchanged between 2005 and 2011, remaining at 28 percent for all students, including Latinos. Other findings are the following:

- The percentage who reported fearing an attack or other harm at school dropped from 12 percent in 1995 to less than 4 percent in 2011; for black and Latino students the drop was greater – from more than 20 percent to less than 5 percent.
- While there has been a decrease in the percentage of students who avoid certain parts of the school because of fear of an attack, for Latino students the data show an uptick, from 4.2 percent in 2009 to 5.4 percent in 2011.

**Source:**

- » Shah, N. “Progress, Persistence Seen in Latest Data on Bullying.” *Education Week* 32, no. 35 (2013): 14.



Fewer than 40 percent of students who have been bullied told an adult about it. For Latino students, many incidents may go unreported out of fear of revealing their undocumented status, or because of reluctance to add to the stress of non-English-speaking immigrant parents.

In states such as Arizona and Alabama that have passed more restrictive laws targeting undocumented immigrants, Latinos have reported more incidents of bullying directed at them. There has been no systematic gathering of statistics related to these incidents and the information so far remains anecdotal.

For LGBT students, the picture is worse. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a 2009 survey of more than seven thousand LGBT middle and high school students aged 13 to 21 years found that because of their sexual orientation

- eight out of ten students had been verbally harassed at school;
- four out of ten had been physically harassed at school;
- six out of ten felt unsafe at school;
- one out of five had been the victim of a physical assault at school.

#### Sources:

- » <http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/>
- » [http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/bullying\\_fs.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/bullying_fs.aspx)
- » <http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm>
- » <http://newlatina.net/children-of-immigrants-face-unique-challenges-with-bullying-at-school/>

### Success Strategy: LGBT Student Support Groups and Arts Education

Numerous studies done during the last decade emphasize the importance of arts education to academic achievement. Besides exposing students to the arts and the enriching experiences they offer, arts education helps students develop skills that can be applied beyond the immediate requirements of a particular art. All of the arts require a certain amount of discipline and goal-setting, and when participation involves academic requirements, arts education encourages the study needed to meet those requirements. The arts offer an added benefit for teenagers as they grapple with myriad issues of identity and acceptance by providing safe avenues of self-expression. These benefits can be especially meaningful to LGBT students and to students who are trying to find their place in a new culture.

*The Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Network* (<http://gsanetwork.org/about-us>) is a youth leadership organization that works to create safe environments in schools for students and to educate the school community about homophobia, gender identity, and sexual orientation issues. One of its main activities is to provide training and support to students who want to start a GSA club at their school. The club functions as a support group and a safe place for LGBT students to express themselves, provides a social community, and works on educating the broader school community about sexual orientation and gender identity issues.



While many educational leaders recognize the value of arts education, its inclusion in the curriculum has been inconsistent. Budgetary issues are often cited as the reason for eliminating art and music, but two examples point the way to making arts education an integral part of the school curriculum.

*Metropolitan Arts & Tech High School*, located in a marginalized neighborhood in southeast San Francisco, has a student body that is largely minority (50 percent Latino, 30 percent African American, and 10 percent white); 75 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The majority of Metro's students enter 9th grade with skills below grade level. Rather than enrolling low-performing students in extra periods of remedial classes, Metro combines arts and technology to provide students with both the needed skills and the challenges that will engage them in learning literacy and numeracy, along with a schedule that reflects an efficient use of time. In 9th grade, every student must take a performing arts class, which helps to engage them in classroom and school life. In 10th grade they must take a digital arts class in order to learn technology and presentation skills. At Metro, arts classes are not optional, and they are all connected to the content that students are studying.

*Clarence Edwards Middle School* in Boston has a student enrollment that is 89 percent low-income and 92 percent minority. In fall 2006, Edwards became one of the pioneering Massachusetts public schools participating in the state's Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Initiative. Instructional time runs until 4:20 each day. With the expanded schedule, the staff decided to integrate the already existing afterschool program, including arts classes, into the curriculum. Using a combination of volunteer teachers and three full-time arts faculty, Edwards provides a strong commitment to dedicating time to arts practice every day.

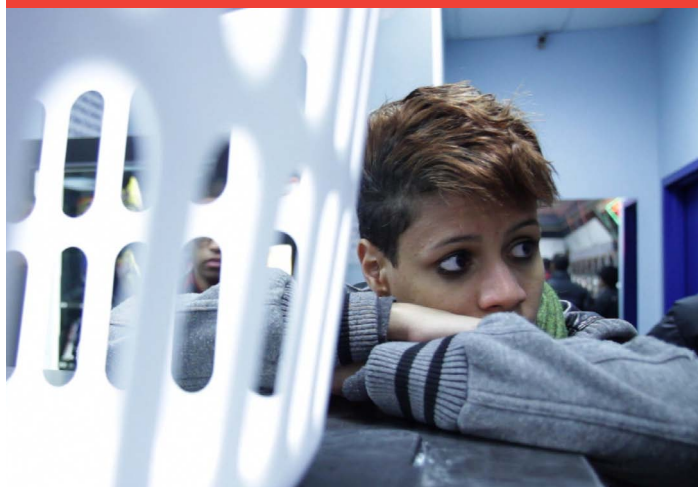
#### Sources:

- » <http://www.edutopia.org/arts-music-curriculum-child-development>
- » [http://www.ehow.com/about\\_5085664\\_performing-arts-important-school.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_5085664_performing-arts-important-school.html)
- » <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/arts-education/Pages/default.aspx>

#### Additional studies to consider:

Barry, N., Taylor, J., Walls, K., and Wood, J. *The Role of the Fine and Performing Arts in High School Dropout Prevention*. Tallahassee: Florida State University, Center for Music Research, 1990. <http://www.artsedsearch.org/summaries/the-role-of-the-fine-and-performing-arts-in-high-school-dropout-prevention>.

Carger, C. "Art and Literacy with Bilingual Children." *Language Arts* 81, no. 4 (2004): 283-292.



## Topics and Issues Relevant to *The Graduates/Los Graduados*

A screening of *The Graduates/Los Graduados* can be used to spark interest in any of the following topics and inspire both individual and community action. In planning a screening, consider finding speakers, panelists, or discussion leaders who have expertise in one or more of the following areas:

**English language learner (ELL) resources**

**Education and employment opportunities for undocumented students**

**LGBT rights**

**Bullying of LGBT, immigrant youth**

**Mentorship programs/community college prep programs**

**Arts organizations and opportunities for high school students**

**Writing workshops and programs for high school youth, including poetry and journalism**

**Alternatives to zero tolerance policies**

**Support for teen parents**

**Girls' empowerment programs**

**Dual-generation parent and child education programs**

**Support networks for gang-affiliated youth**

**Alternatives to teen incarceration**

**Youth leadership development**

**Parent engagement**

## Thinking More Deeply

1. Which issues presented in the film feel most relevant to high school students and graduates in your community? Are the issues connected to one ethnic group or do they affect youth of multiple cultural backgrounds and ethnicities in your community? Give a brief description or explanation.
2. President Obama and other leaders have indicated that college should be a goal for every student. Do you agree that everyone should go to college? What alternatives should be available for those who don't go to college?
3. Many immigrant parents work long hours in order to support themselves and their families. What resources can schools and other community organizations provide to support those parents and help their children engage in positive activities?
4. What measures does your community take in order to create an atmosphere of inclusion? What measures do the schools take?
5. What do you think are the most important characteristics for a productive mentorship relationship?
6. How does school affect students' self-worth and their aspirations? Are some students affected more than others by a lack of resources or the physical condition of the school? Which students, and why?
7. What are some of the particular challenges that many young Latinas face as they navigate the tensions that often exist between their aspirations for academic success, gender roles, and family obligations?
8. What is the responsibility of the school and of teachers to students who are experiencing personal problems? How can they collaborate with parents to support their success?
9. What are the roles of social-emotional learning and learning in the arts in addressing the dropout crisis? Are they different for different student populations?
10. If high school graduation rates are increasing – including the rates for Latinos – is there any reason to be talking about a “crisis” in education? Based on what you saw in the film, what is there to be concerned about?
11. Does the media's portrayal of Latinos or other underrepresented groups play a role in crafting social stereotypes? How so? How can the filmmaker's race/ethnicity/identity have an effect on these representations?
12. Many immigrants see America as the land of opportunity. What educational opportunities do you think are missing for the children of immigrants? Do you think it is important that all children get a quality education? Why or why not?

# Suggestions for Action

Together with other audience members, brainstorm actions that you might take as an individual and that people might do as a group. Here are some ideas to get you started:

## For Parents:

- Parents and teachers have seen increased academic success in students when the parent and teacher work in partnership. At the beginning of the school year, reach out to your child's teachers and ask that you set academic goals together for your child. Working in partnership clears up any uncertainty about what is expected of your student, and will allow you and the teachers to identify challenges and concerns early on.
  - Afterschool programs have been proven to dramatically improve school attendance, homework completion, behavior problems, and academic success. Investigate afterschool programs in your community. Organize a meeting to share what you've learned with parents in your community. Here is a list by state of afterschool program networks: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateMap.cfm>.
  - Create safe routes to school. Safe Moves is an organization that helps parents form "walking school buses," which gets parents involved and visible in the school and community, and familiar with all the other students. <http://www.safemoves.org>.
- ## For Administrators and Teachers:
- Use the Youth Action Guide to develop a Latino youth leadership development seminar or program.
  - Create a bilingual workshop or resource fair after working hours that shares ideas about how parents can help their children develop healthy learning habits and find their own voice within the school system. Families in Schools provides a wealth of information here: [http://www.familiesinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/PSC-Brochure\\_English.pdf](http://www.familiesinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/PSC-Brochure_English.pdf).
  - Host a bilingual town hall meeting or discussion between parents, youth leaders, K-12 educators/counselors, and college/university staff on strategies for preparing students for college.
  - Dedicate your in-house services to meeting the needs of underrepresented groups at your school, especially Latino students and parents.
  - Commit to hiring more Latino teachers, coaches, and administration.
  - Host a bilingual resource fair featuring programs that are available for aiding first-generation college students and Latino youth in their transition from high school to college at local colleges and universities.
  - Connect with your local college access network (LCAN) to promote or host college-readiness classes that deal with educating parents and students on how to fill out financial aid forms, manage application deadlines, develop essay-writing skills, etc.
  - Work with local colleges and/or employers to begin developing a college and career pipeline program that starts in middle school.







#### **For Business Leaders:**

- Work with your local schools to volunteer as mentors or guest speakers.
- Offer internships and jobs to students.
- Donate supplies or activities for classrooms or extracurricular activities.
- Sponsor a reward event, such as tickets for a sporting event or concert, for students with good attendance.
- Start a scholarship fund in your community for Latino graduates and match employee contributions.

#### **For Community Leaders and Policymakers:**

- Create a bilingual community task force on diversity in schools and more programming for underserved student groups.
- Volunteer at an organization assisting underrepresented student groups, especially Latino students.
- Support students in exploring their creative potential by hosting a student art contest or festival.
- Support organizations and community spaces that provide afterschool activities for youth by attending football games, cheering for the basketball teams, and attending performances.

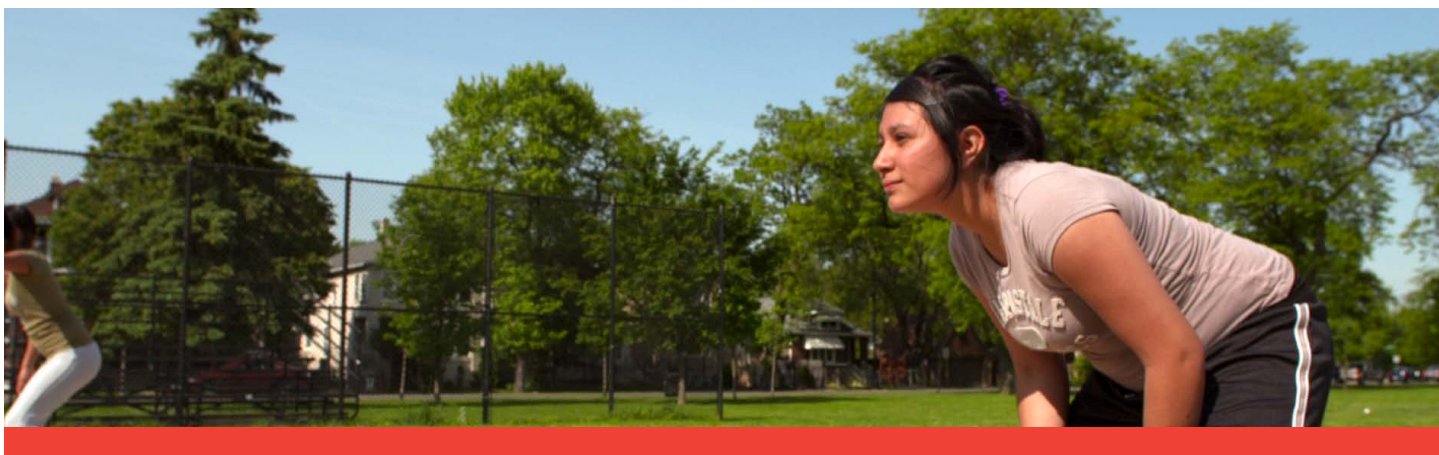
#### **For Students:**

- Download the Youth Action Guide to lead peer-to-peer activities about the graduation rate.
- Tell us why graduating is important to you using video, imagery, or art. Tag it with the hashtag #TheGraduates or #LosGraduados and we'll include it on our website.
- Sign up to be a tutor or mentor for younger students or peers at your school.
- Gather first-person narratives around one of the issues highlighted in the film.

## Add Your Voice to the Conversation!

The *Graduates/Los Graduados* offers a first-hand perspective of the challenges facing many Latino high school students. We've heard from the six students in the film, but now we want to hear from you—any student past or present! Here's how it works:

1. Using Vine or Instagram, record yourself completing this sentence: "I'm graduating/I graduated because..." Be as honest and creative as you'd like; this is YOUR personal graduation story.
2. Upload your video using the caption #TheGraduates or #LosGraduados.
3. Starting the second week of October, look for your video on the *Independent Lens* website and Facebook page. There you'll also be able to find inspiration in the videos from other young people making a positive mark on America's future. Tell your own story and see that you're not alone.



# Resources

## For Parents

- » <http://www.familiesinschools.org/> - Families In Schools offers an array of parent engagement curricula and tools designed for schools and nonprofits to use in engaging parents to support their children's education. For example, Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors is an evidence-based parenting, leadership, and advocacy training program for Latino parents with children aged 0 to 5. The program developed by and for Latino parents aims to improve the outcomes of the nation's Latino children by building the capacity and confidence of parents to be strong and powerful advocates in the lives of their children.
- » <http://www.hfrp.org/> - The Harvard Family Research Project links families, schools, and communities to support success in school and in life. One of their research and advocacy areas is promoting strategies to support family involvement in children's learning and development.

## General

- » <http://www.nclr.org/> - The National Council of La Raza is the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States.
- » <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org> - The nation's leading voice for afterschool programs, the Afterschool Alliance is the only organization dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of afterschool programs and advocating for more afterschool investments. The Afterschool Alliance works with the Administration, Congress, governors, mayors, and advocates across the country, and today has more than twenty-five thousand afterschool program partners around the country.
- » <http://www.cityyear.org> - City Year is an education-focused, nonprofit organization that unites young people of all backgrounds for a year of full-time service to keep students in school and on track to graduation.
- » <http://www.edexcelencia.org/> - To ensure the high caliber of tomorrow's workforce and civic leadership, *Excelencia* in Education links research, policy, and practice to inform policymakers and institutional leaders, who in turn promote policies and practices that support higher educational achievement for Latino and all students.
- » <http://www.votolatino.org/> - Voto Latino is the country's leading organization in registering and engaging young Latino voters.
- » <http://realitychangers.org/> - Reality Changers works with youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, giving them the academic support, financial assistance, and leadership training to become first-generation college students.
- » <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/06/06/34overview.h32.html?tkn=VVCeUqDJEmNPTrrE24T6auYljYGVpercent2BaeEhDY&cmp=clp-sb-ascd> - This recent article from Education Week—"A 'Neglected' Population Gets Another Chance at a Diploma" (5/31/13) -- takes a look at "dropout recovery" programs around the country.

## Youth Action

- » <http://www.dosomething.org/undocumented?success=true> - DoSomething.org is the country's largest nonprofit for young people and social change. This section of the website features a campaign on the experience of being

undocumented.

- » <http://www.nyaamerica.org/> - The National Youth Association was founded in 2010 to give youth a voice in the political process.
- » <http://www.kentucky.com/2013/06/09/2672371/latino-students-at-lexington-high.html> - This article describes a writing project initiated and carried out by Latino students in a Kentucky high school.
- » <http://www.teenink.com/> - *Teen Ink* is a national teen magazine, book series, and website devoted entirely to teen writing, art, photos, and forums.
- » <http://www.dosomething.org/tipsandtools/background-gang-violence> - DoSomething.org is the country's largest nonprofit for young people and social change. It spearheads national campaigns on a variety of causes including bullying and homelessness. This section of the website gives some background on gang violence in this country.
- » <http://www.a4club.org/> - The Youth Ambassadors For Kids Club is aimed at middle schoolers to help them learn how to stand up and speak out against bullying.
- » <http://www.gsanetwork.org/> - The Gay-Straight Alliance Network empowers and supports youth activists in fighting homophobia and transphobia in schools.
- » <http://www.studentsagainsthunger.org/page/hhp/overview-homelessness-america> - The National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness is committed to ending hunger and homelessness in America by educating, engaging, and training students to directly meet individuals' immediate needs while advocating for long-term systemic solutions. This section of the website gives an overview of homelessness in this country.

## Mentoring / Gang Prevention

- » <http://www.mentoring.org/> - The website for MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership has comprehensive information on mentoring, including how to find a mentor and the value of mentoring.
- » <http://www.bbbs.org/> - Big Brothers Big Sisters is the nation's largest mentoring network; see also Latino Bigs: <http://www.latinobigs.org/>.
- » <http://www.bcps.org/offices/sss/pdf/Preventing-Gang-Involvement.pdf> - This Baltimore County Public Schools document lists gang involvement prevention strategies for schools, parents, and communities.
- » [http://cops.usdoj.gov/files/RIC/Publications/GangsCard\\_FBI.pdf](http://cops.usdoj.gov/files/RIC/Publications/GangsCard_FBI.pdf) - This is a Department of Justice quick reference guide for parents regarding recognizing and preventing gang involvement.
- » <http://www.mentoryouth.com/> - This faith-based organization, founded by the National Network of Youth Ministries, offers guidance in becoming a mentor and assistance in finding mentoring opportunities.
- » <http://educationnorthwest.org/nmc> - This nonprofit provides training, technical assistance, research, and consultation to youth mentoring initiatives and programs throughout the United States. Services are fee-based.
- » <http://www.ncpc.org/topics/violent-crime-and-personal-safety/strategies/>



strategy-gang-prevention-through-community-intervention-with-high-risk-youth – This section of the National Crime Prevention Council website offers gang prevention strategies.

- » <http://www.great-online.org/> - Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.) is an evidence-based and effective gang and violence prevention program built around school-based, law enforcement officer-instructed classroom curricula.
- » <http://bgca.org/Pages/index.aspx> - Boys & Girls Clubs of America provides programs and services to promote and enhance the development of young people.

### Resources for Undocumented Youth

- » <http://www.dreamactivist.org/> - DreamActivist.org is a multicultural, migrant youth-led, social media hub for the movement to pass the DREAM Act and pursue the enactment of other forms of legislation that aim to mend the broken immigration system. Contains information on DACA and scholarships.
- » <http://e4fc.org/> - Educators for Fair Consideration supports undocumented young people in their pursuit of college, career, and citizenship. Contains information on DACA and scholarships.
- » <http://www.maldef.org/about/index.html> - The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund is the nation's leading Latino legal civil rights organization. It sponsors an activist Parent School Partnership program and lists scholarships on its website.
- » <http://unitedwedream.org/about/projects/education-deep/> - The DREAM Educational Empowerment Program (DEEP), a project of United We Dream, is designed to address the barriers that undocumented immigrant youth face as they pursue higher education. DEEP builds strategically aligned collaborations between United We Dream affiliates, K-12 educators, community college and university representatives, and community-based organizations and leaders to create pipelines to higher education for undocumented youth.
- » <http://www.nilc.org/eduaccess toolkit.html> - The National Immigration Law Center's Improving Access to Postsecondary Education for Immigrant Students Toolkit provides resources on state campaigns for tuition equity, scholarships, and financial aid.
- » <http://thedreamisnow.org/> - The Dream Is Now is a campaign to advocate and support common-sense reform that gives all undocumented immigrants the chance to earn their citizenship and contribute fully to our society.
- » <http://www.dreamact2013.com/index.html> - This site provides a review of the DREAM Act, its history, and information about its current status.
- » <http://genprogress.org/about/> - Generation Progress is a national organization that works with and for young people to promote progressive solutions to key political and social challenges. The DREAM Act and immigration are among its issues.
- » <http://www.freedomuniversitygeorgia.com/> - Freedom University is a volunteer-driven organization that provides rigorous, college-level instruction to all academically qualified students regardless of their immigration status.

- » <http://thenationalforum.org/he-access/> - The National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good works to promote greater awareness, understanding, commitment, and action in support of the ways that higher education serves our diverse democracy. It promotes action in support of undocumented students. Educators for Fair Consideration and the National Forum are currently compiling a list of all colleges and universities in the country that offer financial aid to undocumented students, to be completed by fall 2013.
- » <http://unitedwedream.org/> - United We Dream organizes and advocates for the dignity and fair treatment of immigrant youth and families, regardless of immigration status.
- » <http://www.uleadnet.org> - The mission of the uLEAD Network is to provide a platform for institutional leaders to engage others in addressing complex challenges related to access to higher education for undocumented students.
- » <http://www.hacu.net/hacu/default.asp> - The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities champions Hispanic success in higher education.
- » [http://uleadnet.org/sites/default/files/casefiles/DACA\\_Brochure.pdf](http://uleadnet.org/sites/default/files/casefiles/DACA_Brochure.pdf) - This brochure from the uLEAD Network contains information about how DACA and the DREAM Act affect financial aid for undocumented college students.

### Bullying / LGBT Issues

- » <http://www.glsen.org/> - The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network conducts original research, trainings, programs, and initiatives and creates resources that document anti-LGBT bias in K-12 schools. They also provide research-related technical assistance and tools designed to be used by educators and students in their own communities.
- » <http://regions.adl.org/southwest/programs/no-place-for-hate.html> - The Anti-Defamation League's No Place for Hate® initiative provides educators and students with the resources to ensure that antibias and diversity education are an integral part of the school curriculum.
- » <http://www.education.com/topic/school-bullying-teasing/> - This site offers an array of information and tips for parents in English and Spanish on how to help children deal with bullying, including LGBT bullying.
- » <http://community.pflag.org/Page.aspx?pid=194&srcid=2> - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) promotes the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons and their families and friends through education, advocacy, and various support activities, with the goal of ending discrimination and securing equal civil rights.
- » <http://www.stopbullying.gov/> - StopBullying.gov provides information from various government agencies on how kids, teens, young adults, parents, educators, and others in the community can prevent or stop bullying.
- » <http://www.nyaamerica.org/2010/11/07/gay-bullying/> - This section of the National Youth Association website presents statistics and other information on gay bullying.
- » <http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/content/school-bullying.html> - This site provides a wide array of statistics and other information on school bullying.







### Teen Pregnancy / Dual-Generation Education

- » <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/> - The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy seeks to improve the well-being of children, youth, families, and the nation by preventing unplanned and teen pregnancy. It works with and provides resources for various audiences, including Latinos and teens.
- » <http://www.stayteen.org/teen-pregnancy> - This website was created by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy; it provides information about sexuality, pregnancy, and teen parenthood. This section of the website gives some background and statistics on teen pregnancy.
- » <http://www.cdc.gov/TeenPregnancy/Parents.htm> - This section of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website offers a variety of teen pregnancy resources for parents.
- » <http://latinainstitute.org/about> - The National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health ensures the fundamental right to reproductive health and justice for Latinas, their families, and their communities through public education, community mobilization, and policy advocacy.
- » <http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/ListeningtoLatinas.pdf> - This report from the National Women's Law Center and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund addresses the challenges that Latinas face in education and explores ways to overcome obstacles that undermine their chances of success.
- » <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/teenagepregnancy.html> - Medline Plus is a service of the National Institutes of Health; this section lists a variety of resources on teen pregnancy.
- » <http://www.teenpregnancystatistics.org/content/teen-pregnancy-facts.html> and <http://www.teenpregnancystatistics.org/content/reasons-for-teen-pregnancies.html> - These two website sections contain important information for adults who want to understand the risks of teen pregnancy and the reasons teens become pregnant.
- » <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?id=412204&RSSFeed=Urban.xml> - This site presents a report: *Two-Generation Strategies and Involving Immigrant Parents in Children's Education*.
- » [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anne-mosle/education-poverty\\_b\\_1287865.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anne-mosle/education-poverty_b_1287865.html) - This Huffington Post article discusses the Aspen Institute's Ascend program of two-generation education strategies.

### Alternatives to Zero Tolerance

- » <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/alternatives-to-zero-tolerance.pdf> - This informative brief from Child Trends discusses nonpunitive alternatives to zero tolerance.
- » <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2012/0927/A-shift-away-from-zero-tolerance-will-improve-school-discipline-video> - This article from *The Christian Science Monitor* describes alternatives to zero tolerance and cites examples of schools using restorative justice.
- » <http://www.cgpolice.org/peer.htm> - This site describes the peer court for juvenile offenders run by the city of Cottage Grove, Oregon.
- » <http://gwired.gwu.edu/hamfish/merlin-cgi/p/downloadFile/d/16949/n/off/> - This research report from Indiana University discusses nonpunitive measures used by principals across the country.

- » <http://www.mncourts.gov/district/1/?page=1225> and <http://www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/29531339.html> - These websites describe two examples of peer courts and peer juries in two Midwestern locations.
- » <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/answer-sheet/discipline/5-myths-about-zero-tolerance-d.html> - This *Washington Post* article explores five myths about zero tolerance disciplinary policies.
- » <http://www.youthcourt.net/> - The National Association of Youth Courts, Inc., a nonprofit membership organization, serves as a central point of contact for youth court programs across the nation, providing informational services, delivering training and technical assistance, and developing resource materials on how to develop and enhance youth court programs in the United States.

### Homelessness / Poverty

- » <http://www.nlchp.org/program.cfm?prog=5> - The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty works to prevent and end homelessness by serving as the legal arm of the nationwide movement to end homelessness.
- » <http://naehcy.org/> - The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth provides a host of resources for teachers and administrators.
- » <http://www.childrensaidsociety.org/community-schools/starting-community-school> - The Children's Aid Society offers assistance to communities wanting to start a community school.
- » <http://www.communityschools.org/default.aspx> - The Coalition for Community Schools promotes the development of more, and more effective, community schools.
- » <http://ilcommunityschools.org/> - The Federation for Community Schools works to bring together individuals and organizations who support community schools throughout Illinois. The website contains examples of successful community school efforts.
- » <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/poverty.aspx> - This feature of the American Psychological Association website reviews the effects of poverty, hunger, and homelessness on children and youth.
- » <http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/> - The Coalition for the Homeless is the nation's oldest advocacy and direct service organization helping homeless men, women, and children.
- » <http://familypromise.org/fast-facts> - Family Promise is a nonprofit organization committed to helping low-income families – including homeless families -- achieve lasting independence. This section of the site contains some facts about homelessness and poverty.

# COMMUNITY CINEMA DISCUSSION GUIDE

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## About American Graduate

**American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen** is helping local communities identify and implement solutions to the high school dropout crisis. American Graduate demonstrates public media's commitment to education and its deep roots in every community it serves. Beyond providing programming that educates, informs and inspires, public radio and television stations – locally owned and operated – are an important resource in helping to address critical issues, such as the dropout rate. In addition to national programming, public radio and television stations across the country have launched on-the-ground efforts working with community and at risk youth to keep students on-track to high school graduation. More than 1000 partnerships have been formed locally through American Graduate, and CPB is working with Alma and Colin Powell's America's Promise Alliance and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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