

BRIDGING THE LATINO ACHIEVEMENT GAP



Challenges for the Latino Learner

- ✎ View mathematics through a Hispanic cultural lens
- ✎ Takes 5-7 years to learn academic vocabulary
- ✎ Family culture encourages children to stay at home rather than attend pre-K programs
- ✎ Acculturation period, even for U.S. born Latinos, when entering American schools
- ✎ 43% of U.S. born children of immigrants do not speak English “very well”
- ✎ Stress related to citizenship status of family members
- ✎ Low expectations from teachers
- ✎ Lack of cultural understanding among educators
- ✎ Difficulty engaging parents due to language barriers

Developed as part of the Leadership III course in the NSF Middle School Mathematic Specialist Grant project in conjunction with Virginia Mathematics and Science Coalition, Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Virginia, and Norfolk State University.



Culturally Relevant Information

- ✎ Parents place high value on education for their family
- ✎ High regard for family interdependence and loyalty
- ✎ Positive view of education system and teaching profession
- ✎ Religion plays an important role in the culture of Latinos
- ✎ Children respect their parents and strive to please the family
- ✎ Proud of heritage and expect culture to be treated with dignity
- ✎ Family’s role is to instill cultural, behavioral, and moral values
- ✎ Parents see school’s role as providing education and respectfully maintaining boundaries

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Best Practices for Supporting Latino Learners

Cultural Considerations

- ✎ Use culturally relevant curriculum to engage students in mathematical learning
- ✎ Incorporate projects, activities, and tasks that allow students to access background knowledge
- ✎ Embrace cultural knowledge as a resource rather than a barrier

Social Considerations

- ✎ Provide teacher, peer, and school community support to promote academic success
- ✎ Maintain high expectations with appropriate support
- ✎ Allow bilingual classroom discussion
- ✎ Permit collaboration and discussion to deepen understanding
- ✎ Realize high engagement often brings multimodal communication
- ✎ Create mathematical opportunities that allow students to participate socially
- ✎ Recognize the collective effort rather than always emphasizing the individual effort



Best Practices for Supporting Latino Learners

Cognitive Resources

- ✎ Provide cognitively challenging learning environment to maintain high expectations
- ✎ Develop rich tasks with adequate support to make student thinking visible
- ✎ Encourage academic engagement through questioning
- ✎ Show support by recognizing growth and achievement

Family Resources

- ✎ Be flexible with time and use multiple forms of communication when dealing with families
- ✎ Invite parents to become involved partners by having a formal arena in which they can share their ideas and concerns
- ✎ Do not misinterpret lack of parental involvement as lack of caring
- ✎ Make expectations clear for academics and behavior
- ✎ Make families aware of the connection between current academic efforts and future opportunities