The Impact of District Variations in High School Graduation Requirements on Latino Newcomers

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AERA 2015
Presentation Outline

- Immigrant Newcomers in the U.S.
- Data and Methods
- Findings
- Discussion
The U.S. Immigrant Population Is Growing and Is Largely Latino
74,000 Unaccompanied Minors Entered the U.S. in FY 2014

The Child Migrant Surge
Unaccompanied children caught at the US border, 2008-13

- All countries
- Mexico
- El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

Source: US Customs and Border Patrol
Immigrant Youth Are More Likely To Be Older and Recent Arrivals

Foreign-born English learners in grades 6-12 have been in the U.S. for 3 years or less.
Newcomers Encounter Many Challenges in U.S. High Schools

- Structural issues:
  - Immigration policy
  - Language policy
  - Poverty
  - Segregation

- Educational challenges:
  - Valid and reliable assessments
  - Teachers prepared to teach immigrants
  - College preparatory courses
  - Counseling
Attention to Newcomers at the Secondary Level Is Critical

• High school staff members need to know more about how to meet the needs of these students
• More research is needed on immigrants and English learners in the secondary grades
• Efforts to increase college readiness and college completion should focus on immigrant students
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Tracing the Pathways of Newcomers

- Participants in a pilot demonstration project
  - Bilingual college preparatory math and science courses
  - Counseling interventions
  - Parent training courses
- Implemented in 2008-2012 in four Southern California high schools
- 451 total students served
- This study sampled from the 169 students in the 2011 and 2012 graduation year cohorts—it is not a representative sample of all newcomers
Primary Data

• Postsecondary student survey (n = 56)
• Postsecondary student interviews (n = 21)

Secondary Data

• Project SOL
  – High school observations (n = 270)
  – High school interviews (n = 47)
  – Student surveys (n = 206)
  – Student records

• District documents (policies)
Postsecondary Survey Respondents

• Students
  – Majority of their K-8 schooling took place outside of the U.S.
  – Schooling experiences varied
  – Average age at migration was 13
  – 66% graduated high school
  – Time in U.S. ~ 6 years as of fall 2013

• Households
  – < 1 in 4 parents had graduated high school
  – 96.6% reported household income below $35,000
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# Enrollment and Graduation Outcomes, Classes of 2011 and 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Known Status</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn/Unknown</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(183)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Navigating High School: English Credits Required To Graduate

Variations in how much ESL/ELD courses counted toward graduation requirements

– California Department of Education requires three years of ELA, but does not specify how these credits can be fulfilled

– CA universities/colleges permit one year of ELD to count toward the required four years of English
Districts Exercise Autonomy Over ELA Credit Requirement

• Many districts are moving toward a default “college preparatory” curriculum
  – Los Angeles
  – San Diego
  – San Francisco
  – Oakland
  – Sweetwater
  – East Side Union

• Other districts allow 3-4 years of ELD/ESL to count toward ELA requirement
  – Border districts counted up to three years of ESL/ELD toward English graduation requirement
## High School English Credit Requirements and ESL Credit Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Required Mainstream English Courses</th>
<th>Years of ESL Fulfilling English Graduation Requirement</th>
<th>2011-12 English Learner Cohort Graduation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desierto Regal</td>
<td>English 1 required (Freshman English)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno</td>
<td>English 1 (may be SDAIE)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>66.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Beach</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>3 years, including 12th grade composition and English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>One year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Ana</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punta del Mar</td>
<td>English 12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>71.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some Students Had To Fulfill All ELA Requirements Senior Year

Alfonso: Fueron muchas clases ESL, como el básico, ESL 1, ESL 2, ESL 3, el 4 y así, hasta el 10, 11 y 12.

Entrevistadora: Las clases de inglés fuera de ESL ¿y cómo lo hiciste? ¿Tomaste 10, 11 y 12 todo en el último año?

Alfonso: Sí, todo . . . Sí, el último año estaba tomando puras clases de inglés porque eran las que faltaban, entonces casi todos mis periodos eran prácticamente de inglés.
The Burden of English Requirements

“A lot of time it’s like it doesn’t matter to them, like, ‘Why do I need to graduate?’ Many will say, ‘I still need a lot of English classes, why make the effort if I still have to stay for another two years to finish my English classes?”
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Should ELA and ELD courses be integrated?
- ELA and ELD standards have been aligned, but credits have not followed
- Some schools and districts are experimenting with integrated ELD/ELA course sequences
- Another approach is a hybrid, such as New York, where:
  - 3 units of beginning ESL = 1 ELA core credit, 2 elective credits
  - 2 credits intermediate ESL = 1 ELA credit, 1 elective credit
  - 2 units advanced ESL = 2 core ELA credits
- Research on relationship between ELD and ELA assessments is limited.
- CCSS are requiring more attention to language across content areas
For more information

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