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New Report on Hispanic Student Achievement Shows Stark Realities and Challenges

Urban School Group Seeks Improvements

WASHINGTON, Nov. 29 -- Many of the nation's Hispanic school-aged children face circumstances that challenge their potential to learn and school systems' ability to provide a quality education to this growing population.

This is the picture painted in a new report by the Council of the Great City Schools called *Today's Promise, Tomorrow's Future: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Hispanics in Urban Schools*. The report tells a story of hope and optimism and a tale of caution and uncertainty.

Hispanics represent some 23 percent of school-aged children in the United States, with 37 percent enrolled in the nation's big-city schools. Since 2000, approximately 90 percent of Hispanic children under the age of 18 were born within the United States, the report reveals, noting that the history of Latinos in the country dates as far back as the mid-1800s.

Although the structure of Hispanic families is considered stable, compared with other groups, a large number of Hispanic parents face social and economic circumstances that hinder the education of their children. Such conditions as poverty, lack of health insurance and language barriers, to name a few, compound the problem.

"Hispanic young people are a growing part of the American landscape and promise to shape the cultural and demographic flavor of the United States for the foreseeable future," says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly.

"Yet, many Hispanic students are not doing well in our Great City Schools and our schools, in turn, are not doing well by them."

Study Findings

The groundbreaking study focuses on the lives of Hispanic students in big-city schools from early childhood to adulthood, and analyzes distinctions between Hispanic and Latino English-language learners (ELL). Highlights of the report's findings show:

- **In readiness to learn**, 33 percent of Hispanic children in 2008 lived in families where no parent had full-time employment compared with 21 percent of white children. And in 2007, 27 percent of Hispanic children lived in poverty compared with 10 percent of white children.
- **In Hispanic and English-language learner (ELL) achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**, the percentage of Hispanic students in large cities performing at or above *Proficient* levels in reading from 2003 to 2009 was at least 26 percentage points lower than white students in public schools nationally at grade four and 24 points lower at grade eight. In mathematics during those same years, the percentage of Hispanic students performing at or above *Proficient* levels was at least 29 percentage points lower than white students at grade four and 26 points lower at grade eight.

The report also shows that average scores for fourth- and eighth-grade formerly English-language learner Hispanic students in large cities were significantly higher than ELL Hispanic students in large cities in both reading and mathematics.

- **In Hispanic and ELL Hispanic achievement on NAEP in selected big-city school districts**, reading and math scores among Hispanic and ELL students in the big-city school districts participating in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) were generally lower than their respective Hispanic counterparts in public schools nationally at grades four and eight. Moreover, at least 50 percent of fourth- and eighth-grade Hispanic and ELL students in most TUDA districts scored below *Basic* levels.
- **In college and career readiness**, Hispanic students in 2008 were two-and-a-half times more likely to drop out of high school as white students and almost twice as likely as black students. And in 2010, fewer than two of 10 Hispanic students took an Advanced Placement exam compared with six of 10 white students.
- **In school experience**, Hispanic high school students were less likely to participate in academic clubs, more likely to be suspended from school, and more likely to be retained in a grade than their white peers.
- **In postsecondary experience**, the unemployment rate of the Hispanic population ages 20 and older in early 2011 was 12 percent compared with 8 percent of the white population. In 2009, some 13 percent of Hispanic students ages 18 and older had earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared with 33 percent of white students. And the Hispanic population ages 18 and over in 2008 accounted for 12 percent of the college population and 16 percent of the nation's prison population.

The Council plans to convene a panel of esteemed leaders to provide advice and guidance on improving the education of Hispanic students in the nation's urban schools.