



# LA FRONTERA

**Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Education  
Along the U.S. - Mexico Border**

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Along the U.S.-Mexico Border**

March 2004

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## Acknowledgements

From its inception, this report has involved the collective effort of a number of people. Edward Sloat, Director of Research, Planning, and Assessment in Peoria (AZ) Unified School District, provided census, achievement, and other data as well as extensive analysis fundamental to this project. The programs and strategies section of Part 3 draws substantially from a research report prepared by Winnie Tsen while she was completing graduate work at the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley.

We are also grateful to June Lee-Bayha, Policy Associate, and Tenley Harrison, Research Assistant, who contributed logistical support and review; Noel White, Communications Associate, and Joy Zimmerman, Senior Communicator, for their invaluable editing; Freddie Baer, for laying out and producing the document; Rosemary De La Torre, who handled proofreading; and Ann Wallgren for administrative assistance.



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This report was developed by WestEd for the Arizona School Boards Association, the California School Boards Association, the New Mexico School Boards Association, and the Texas Association of School Boards. We particularly thank Carlos E. Nieto, past president of the Texas Association of School Boards, for his leadership in promoting this report.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education is widely considered to be the key to a sustainable future in the booming but troubled United States-Mexico border region known as La Frontera. Yet present levels of support for overburdened education systems in the border states of Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas are inadequate.

This report points out that over the past decade, largely as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement, enormous growth has characterized the border economy on both the U.S. and Mexican sides. With job creation came a population surge. The boom has occurred without planning, however. It has led to jobs but not prosperity. Its results have included crises in housing and health care, a water shortage, environmental degradation and a rise in environmental health concerns, and infrastructure challenges, such as insufficient roadway and power systems.

Today an array of players and coalitions is working to shift the region from its narrow focus on job growth to a carefully planned program of sustainable economic and societal development. To date, the boom has been fueled by growth in low-wage, low-skill jobs, particularly in the *maquiladora* industry. Civic leaders now seek to broaden that employment base to include higher skill jobs in such industries as biotechnology, communications, and technology-driven manufacturing. Their efforts are gaining importance as many low-skill manufacturing jobs move to Asia.

Meanwhile, binational leadership coalitions from state and local government, non-governmental organizations, nonprofit agencies, and industry are launching initiatives to improve health conditions and health care, housing availability, water and sewage systems, and air quality and to expand general infrastructure capability in the region.

Notably, whether the issue is job training, health, the environment, or infrastructure development, each planning effort comes to a similar conclusion: La Frontera's future depends on education.

This report's examination of K-12 school systems within 20 miles of the border on the U.S. side reveals a mixed picture. Students in the region tend to come from high-poverty homes, speak Spanish as their first language, and have parents with low education levels. Many have little or no access to health or dental care, and their families lack needed social and/or housing services. In some areas, health problems are exacerbated by water- or air-borne diseases.

Especially in remote areas, schools have difficulty finding and keeping well-qualified teachers. Often, teachers have little understanding of the border's cross-cultural issues

and/or little training in instructional strategies to help them reach bicultural English learners and their families. Resources for technology tend to be scarce.

Predictably, student achievement in the border region of each state lags behind that of the rest of the state. The gap is narrower in California and widest in Arizona and Texas. Most troubling is the pattern revealed by analysis of achievement scores: the higher their grade levels, the more La Frontera students fall behind their peers elsewhere in the state.

Certain school districts in La Frontera – one of them profiled in this report – have made impressive progress in bolstering student achievement, lowering dropout rates, and raising knowledge and skill levels and college-going rates. The key to success in such examples is partnerships – with community colleges and universities; industry; health care, housing, and social service providers; and civic and business leaders. In these cases, the school system becomes the hub of a concerted, communitywide focus on education, with resources from all sectors coordinated in order to ensure that young people are prepared to lead satisfying, productive lives.

This report concludes that the future prosperity of La Frontera calls for expansion of that model. It calls for making education the hub of a regionwide, high-profile public-private partnership. We propose that this partnership be structured around a federal designation of the entire border region as an Education Enterprise Zone (EEZ). Jump-started by an infusion of federal funds, the EEZ would attract an array of resources and galvanize the energies of higher education, business, civic, and nonprofit players around the educational improvement each has recognized as fundamental to sustainable regional development.



## INTRODUCTION

In August 2002, WestEd published *Voices of La Frontera: A Study of School Districts Along the United States/Mexico Border*, a report commissioned by the border states' school boards associations that broadly sketched what life is like in U.S. school districts in the region within 100 miles of the border. This document extends that study, narrowing the geographic focus this time to 20 miles. It uses newly available 2000 census<sup>1</sup> data to update key information from the first report and makes comparisons with data for areas 21–100 miles from the border, as well as with statewide data.<sup>2</sup>

More than that, this report examines student achievement data in school districts closest to the border and compares performance with that of students farther away. Importantly, it also reports on educational practices in the 20-mile region that are specifically geared to addressing student needs in the region and that show promise of improving student learning and achievement.

Finally, given the advent of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), it discusses practices and outcomes close to the border in the context of NCLB's goals.

The report is organized as follows:

Part 1 gives an overview of conditions in this 20-mile band adjacent to the border, particularly pinpointing high levels of poverty, low levels of education, and poor health conditions; ethnicity that is predominantly Hispanic; and large numbers of people whose primary language at home is Spanish.<sup>3</sup>

Part 2 focuses on student achievement, describing how students closest to the border fare relative to students statewide on their state's assessment and in terms of making adequate yearly progress (AYP) as defined by NCLB.<sup>4</sup>

Part 3 focuses on promising practices. It describes discrete programs and strategies that districts across the region employ and also takes an in-depth look at how one district puts the pieces together in a cohesive, comprehensive approach.

Part 4 discusses implications for policy and practice.



## PART 1: OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

The region along the U.S.-Mexico border is variously described as dynamic, colorful, and turbulent; diverse, parochial, and even dangerous. It is a place where ethnic traditions and languages blend; where a child's lunchbox can say a cultural mouthful with its hot dog wrapped in a tortilla.

Four U.S. states share the border with six Mexican states in an expanse that features deserts and dusty plains, urban centers and farms, affluence and poverty. It is home to more than 10 million people,<sup>5</sup> a population that is half non-Hispanic at the California end and almost entirely Hispanic in Texas. In many of the region's dozen-plus binational twin cities, daily life across the two cities is so intertwined that if it weren't for traffic jams at customs, people criss-crossing for work or socializing would nearly forget they are changing municipalities, no less traversing a border. Today these are boomtowns, energized by jobs and growth but also – as with most boomtowns – feeling the burdens of fast-paced change.

The region has changed dramatically over the last five decades. In the 1950s, much of the border area was an isolated backwater, where, for example, children in Texas's lower Rio Grande valley worked with their parents in the fields. Education was a luxury.<sup>6</sup> By the late 1990s, children here instead headed for college or for jobs in the mushrooming retail, manufacturing supply, and tourist industries. Instead of white landowners and Mexican peasants, the valley had become home to an urban Latino middle class.<sup>7</sup>

The changes owe to rapid industrialization, which began in the 1960s when Mexico initiated its *maquiladora* program. It accelerated with the advent of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. The *maquiladoras* – industrial plants that produce goods duty-free for export – have been pivotal in Mexico's effort to attract foreign investment and jobs to its northern border. Beginning as assembly line plants that cut costs by taking advantage of cheap labor, they gradually shifted to higher-level manufacturing, adding state-of-the-art automation and new management practices. After NAFTA, they expanded annually at double-digit rates. So many workers from all over Mexico have rushed to the border for jobs that the population jumped 30 percent between 1990 and 2001.<sup>8</sup>

The *maquiladoras* also triggered an influx of business on the U.S. side to supply needed products and services. Japanese firms, for example, built plants and warehouses in border towns in each of the four border states.<sup>9</sup> One U.S.-based firm that began opening *maquiladoras* in Ciudad Juarez in 1978 today has 19,000 employees in 15 Mexican plants. More than 350 of its employees commute to Juarez daily from its sister city, El Paso,

creating an annual in-flow of about \$100 million into El Paso's coffers in rent, car sales, and other business. Company visitors who stay in El Paso and El Paso contractors who work with the company represent another \$210 million in income to the city.<sup>10</sup>

With a host of such cross-border interchanges, small wonder that El Paso defines itself as a principal hub of what's often called the "borderplex" economy.<sup>11</sup> One outgrowth is an increasing group of people, dubbed "borderlanders," who have close family and social ties on both sides of the border and move fluidly between the two countries.<sup>12</sup>

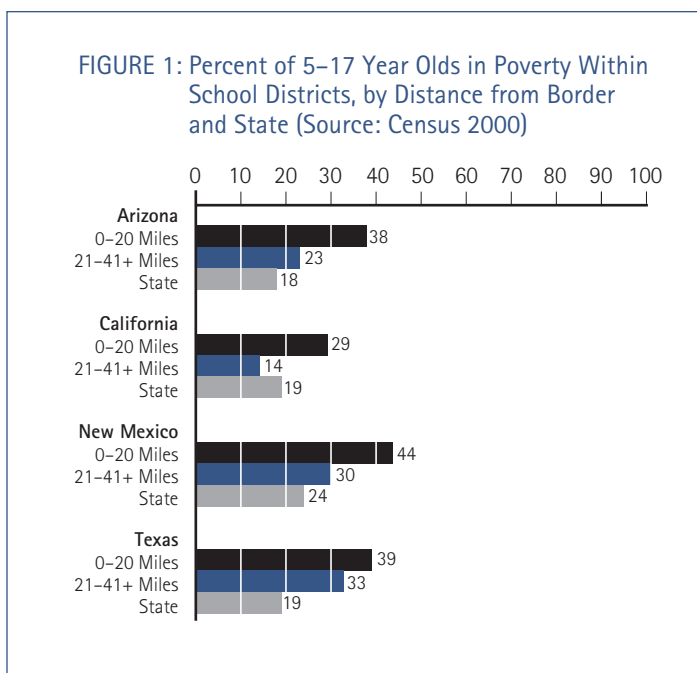
For all of its positives, unplanned economic development has a strong downside. The volume of growth throughout the region has placed an overwhelming burden on existing infrastructure. On both sides of the border, cities and towns have been unable to keep up with demands for water, electricity, roads, schools, health care, transportation, and housing. Meanwhile, contrary to some expectations, more jobs have not translated to higher wages. Much of the region's population remains poor. In Mexico, wages have recently fallen as the *maquiladoras* struggle to compete with lower-wage countries – notably China – to which factories have begun to move.<sup>13</sup> On the U.S. side, new jobs also tend to be low-wage, a situation especially troublesome in California, where the cost of living is high. Workers often receive no health or other benefits, leaving families to depend on public assistance.<sup>14</sup>

By Mexican standards, workers in the region are, overall, economically ahead. But on the U.S. side, per capita income lags considerably behind the national average. Job growth has not translated to prosperity.

Data compiled by the Border Health Commission indicate the problem's scope:<sup>15</sup>

- » 3 of the 10 poorest counties in the U.S. are located in the border area;
- » 21 of the border counties have been designated as economically distressed areas;
- » approximately 432,000 people, priced out of conventional housing, live in 1,200 *colonias* in Texas and New Mexico (*colonias* are unincorporated, semi-rural communities characterized by substandard housing and unsafe public drinking water or wastewater systems);
- » the unemployment rate along the border in Texas is 250–300 percent higher than that of the rest of the country; and
- » due to rapid industrialization, communities on the Mexican side have less access to basic water and sanitation services than the rest of that nation.

These conditions create a fertile environment for the spread of disease, and border towns have the double burden of being vulnerable to diseases both of emerging nations, such as diarrhea, and of the developed world, such as stress and diabetes.<sup>16</sup> Environmental problems resulting from air and water pollution abound. The grave water shortage has cost Texas alone an estimated \$1 billion and 30,000 jobs due to reduced agricultural operations.<sup>17</sup> More fundamentally, it threatens the region's very viability.



With high birth rates and continued in-migration, the area's population is expected to double by 2025,<sup>18</sup> immeasurably compounding these challenges.

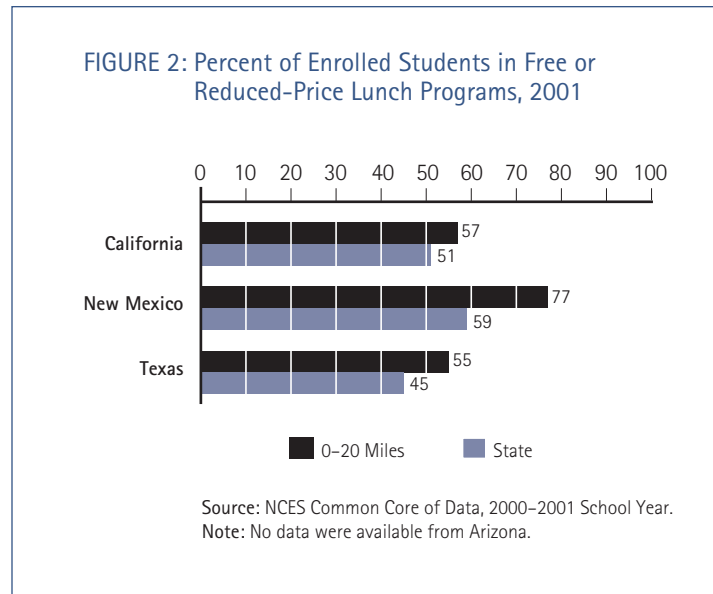
Challenges are greatest within 20 miles of the border. WestEd's first La Frontera report<sup>19</sup> mapped out demographic and socioeconomic data for the U.S. region within 100 miles of the border. Here we focus on the region within 20 miles of the border, making comparisons to the 21–100 mile range as well as to the state as a whole.<sup>20</sup>

The latest data support what educators in the region report: Schools near the border serve a growing population of students who are largely low-income and Hispanic and whose parents have low education levels. Many of these students speak Spanish at home. Following are illustrative data in five categories: poverty; culture, race, and ethnicity; school-age population size and growth; language and mobility; and education levels in the overall population.

## Poverty

Despite pockets of affluence, as a whole, the 20-mile strip along the Mexican border lags behind overall U.S. income levels. Those closest to the border tend to have the lowest incomes. The eastern half of the border region is poorer and has a narrower economic base; the urban centers are better off than the smaller border towns.<sup>21</sup> Communities in this region are marked by:

» **More low-income households.** In three of the four states, the percentage of households with incomes less than \$25,000 is greatest within 20 miles of the border. In Texas, the percentage within 20 miles of the border is the same as statewide.



» **A lower median income level.** In all four states, the median income (for household as well as for family) is lowest near the border. The family median ranges from \$10,000 (NM) to \$18,000 (TX), less than the statewide median in each state. (On a per capita basis, the differences narrow.)

- » **More families in poverty.** In all four states, the percentage of families in poverty is greater near the border.
- » **Higher proportion of children living in poverty.** In all four states, areas closest to the border have significantly higher percentages of children ages 5–17 living in poverty.
- » **Larger percentage of students in free and reduced-price lunch programs.** These data confirm that students closest to the border suffer from poverty at rates higher than those 21–100 miles from the border and those statewide.

### *Culture, race, and ethnicity*

Here again, the profile changes from the western part of the border to the eastern. On the western end, even close to the border, the population is largely non-Hispanic, while much of the eastern half is overwhelmingly Hispanic. Moreover, at the eastern end, high birth and immigration rates are resulting in an increasingly Hispanic population.<sup>22</sup> Across the states, there is also a significant Native American population, with about 80,000 tribal members living in the immediate border region.<sup>23</sup> Census data for the region underscore the trends:

» **Larger Hispanic population.** Except in California, within 20 miles of the border the Hispanic population outdistances non-Hispanics. In all four states, the Hispanic

population at the border is proportionally larger than that of the outer border region as well as that statewide. At the border in New Mexico and Texas, Hispanics outnumber non-Hispanics by 52 and 68 percentage points, respectively.

» **Predominantly Hispanic student population.**

Confirming data reported by La Frontera superintendents in WestEd's first study, a significant majority of students closest to the border are Hispanic. While only 41.4 percent of students statewide are Hispanic, over 73 percent of students closest to the border are Hispanic.

FIGURE 3: Hispanic Population in School Districts, by State and Distance From Border (Source: Census 2000/Proximity One)

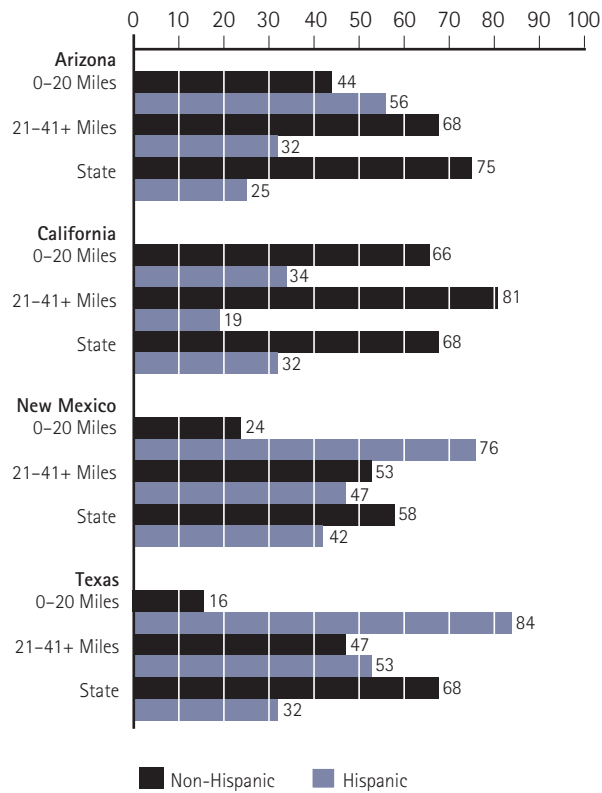
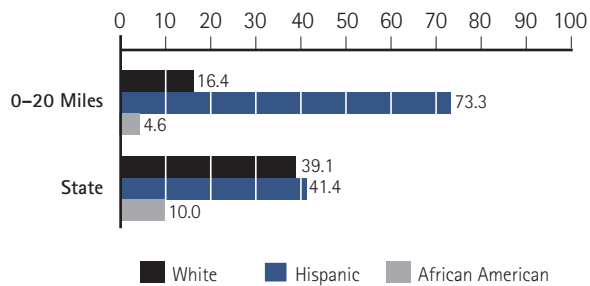


FIGURE 4: Race/Ethnicity of Student Population, 2001



Source: NCES Common Core of Data, 2000-2001 School Year.  
 Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of smaller racial/ethnic groups that were not included.

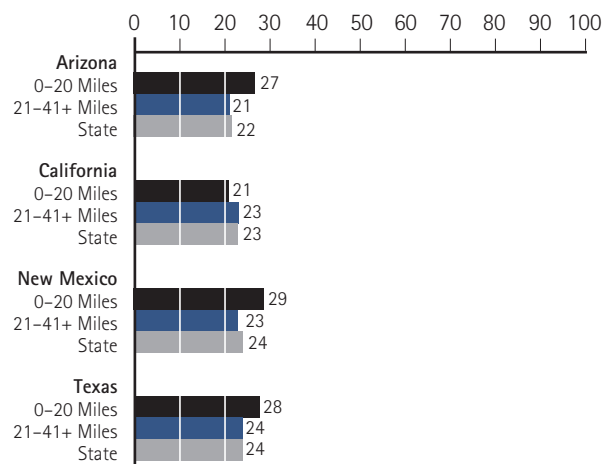
## School-age population size and growth

In both rural and urban border areas, the birth rate in recent years is higher than in the rest of the state. In Texas, it is 40 percent higher.<sup>24</sup> Higher birth rates translate to a higher school-age population.

### » More 5–19 year olds.

In Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, the portion of the population between 5 and 19 years old ranges from 22–24 percent statewide, but that percentage increases closer to the border (27, 29, and 28 percent respectively). California's percentages are lower – 23 percent statewide versus 21 percent in the border region.

FIGURE 5: Percent of 5–19 Year Olds in School Districts, by State and Distance from Border (Source: Census 2000/Proximity One)



### » More households with children under 18.

Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas each have more households with children under 18 at the border compared to households 21–100 miles away. The larger differences in the number of families with children under 18 between districts closest to the border and those 21–100 miles away suggest that the size of the 0–5 age group is larger at the border. Again, California is the exception: There, 41 percent of households that are 21–100 miles from the border have children under 18, compared to 35 percent at the border.

## Language and mobility

The data show that, relative to each state as a whole, near the border more students speak Spanish at home and the migrant population is larger.

» **More speak Spanish as their primary language at home.** This is the case in all four states within 20 miles of the border, with differences from the statewide totals only slight in California, but exceeding 30 percentage points in Arizona and New Mexico; 50 in Texas. Only California data show a significant number of border families with



a primary language other than Spanish. The smaller percentages of Spanish speakers in California likely reflects the polyglot nature of that state; about a third of California's students are English learners, but their native languages are diverse.

» **More are designated as Limited English Proficient or English Language Learners.**

Larger percentages of La Frontera students struggle with English language acquisition than do students statewide. The greatest differences in language ability occur in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Twenty-eight percent of California's La Frontera students are classified as English Language Learners (ELL) while 27 percent of students statewide are deemed ELL.

FIGURE 6: Percent of School District Population Age 5+ Years Whose Primary Language Spoken at Home is Not English, by State and Distance from Border (Source: Census 2000/Primary One)

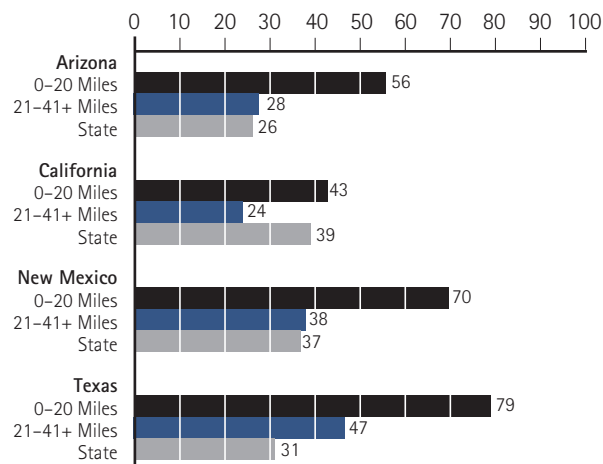
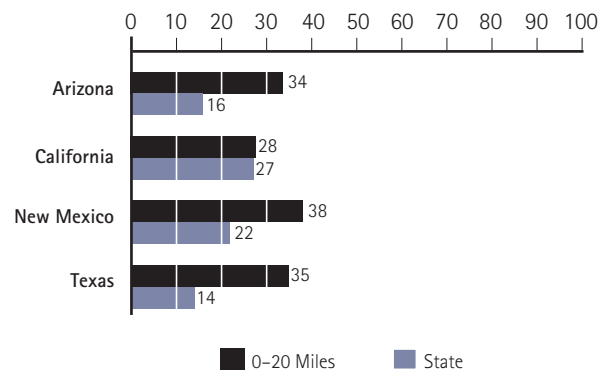


FIGURE 7: Percent of Enrolled Students Designated LEP/ELL, 2001

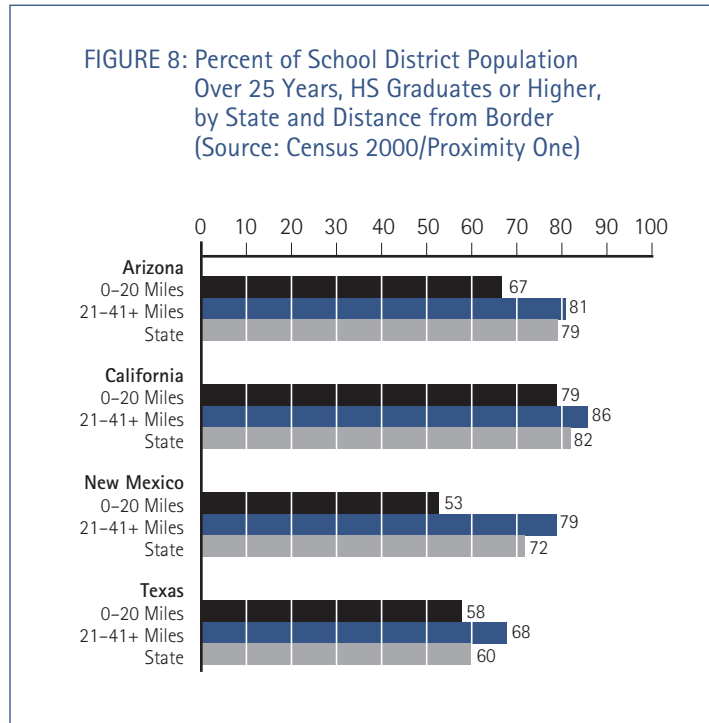


» **Larger migrant populations.** Higher percentages of student populations closest to the border are migrants – 5 percent compared with 1.9 percent in the 21–100 mile region.<sup>25</sup> Texas and California each receive roughly 20,000 migrant students a year.<sup>26</sup> The bilingual and bicultural nature of the districts closest to the border is both an integral aspect of the culture of border communities as well as a challenge for educators.

## Education levels

Parental education level influences children's readiness for school, how they fare in school, and to what level they pursue education.

» **Lower levels of education.** In all four states, adults living closest to the border are less likely to have at least a high school diploma than those living 21–100 miles from the border or those statewide. However, those in the outer region of the border are more likely to have completed high school than those statewide. Education levels in the western end of the border region are notably higher than those in New Mexico and Texas.



**Seen through the lens of education planning,** three issues loom large. The first is that jobs generated by the *maquila* industry have largely attracted uneducated, unskilled workers. As a result, large numbers of children in the schools come from poor families and need multiple kinds of services and help to learn well and thrive.

The second is a more recent development that raises the ante: in the globalized economy, much of the region's manufacturing base is now shifting to Asia, a trend that has created pressure in La Frontera to lure industries that require higher levels of knowledge and skill (e.g., biotechnology, communications, and software). Thus, new employers locating in the area are likely to be seeking technically and managerially adept professionals, and it's all the better if they are bicultural and bilingual. Schools, then, have an added imperative to ensure that students, though often starting out behind, excel and have opportunities to pursue postsecondary education.

Finally, La Frontera desperately needs a border citizenry that understands and has the capacity to confront the complexities of the region's formidable social and environmental challenges by generating innovative, sustainable, binational solutions.

## PART 2: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

A look at student achievement data in La Frontera reveals a mixed picture. California students generally perform on a par with or slightly lower than their peers elsewhere in the state. In the other three states, however, student scores are consistently lower at the border, in some cases markedly so. Most alarming is a pattern that emerges, especially in Arizona and Texas: The higher their grade level, the more La Frontera students lag behind students statewide.

**Methodology.** This section presents state-by-state achievement data and in each state compares the performance of students within 20 miles of the border with that of students statewide. It also offers data on the number of districts or schools making adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the 20-mile region and statewide. (Each state defines AYP in a state plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.)

Several factors make it impossible to compare achievement across states. For starters, each state administers different assessments. Moreover, Arizona, California, and Texas have criterion-referenced tests in place aligned to state standards, while New Mexico continues to rely on data from a norm-referenced, national test to monitor student progress. This makes it impossible to average scores across states. Using data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is not feasible because it tests only a sample of students by state, making it impossible to determine how students in any particular region of a state (e.g., La Frontera) are performing.

The data presented reflect the decision to focus, where possible, on student performance defined in terms of "passing/failing" to meet state standards in reading and mathematics as reported by each state's assessment program. Data in this format are available for Arizona, California, and Texas. New Mexico's State Department of Education Web site offers no district-level, subject-specific data. Thus, while state-level subject scores are reported, comparison of New Mexico's La Frontera districts with statewide data requires the use of composite scores.

### *Student Achievement on State Tests*

#### **ARIZONA**

The Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) is a standards-based mathematics, reading, and writing assessment administered at grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. Arizona's performance levels include "falls far below the state standard," "approaches the standard," "meets the standard," and "exceeds the standard." The data below reflect the percent of students "meeting" or "exceeding" the standard in mathematics and reading.

TABLE 1. 2003 AIMS Mathematics Passing Rates (%) by Grade and Location<sup>27</sup>

Grade Level	Arizona	La Frontera (0-20 miles)	Difference <sup>28</sup>
3	67	62	-5
5	50	44	-6
8	21	16	-5
10	39	22	-17

TABLE 2. 2003 AIMS Reading Passing Rates (%) by Grade and Location

Grade Level	Arizona	La Frontera (0-20 miles)	Difference
3	77	72	-5
5	57	49	-8
8	55	44	-11
10	61	49	-12

Source: State-level data sourced from the ADE Report wizard at <http://www.ade.az.gov/profile/publicview/> for "Districts, Category 1." December 2003.

#### ARIZONA STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- » **Lower pass rate in La Frontera.** The pass rate for La Frontera students on the AIMS mathematics and reading assessments is consistently lower than that of students statewide.
- » **Mathematics gap increases in high school.** The mathematics difference appears to stay consistent until 10th grade where students statewide are passing at a rate that is dramatically higher than those in La Frontera – 39 percent pass statewide compared to 22 percent at the border.
- » **Reading gap increases in middle and high school.** In reading, the difference between La Frontera passing rates and those of the state grows consistently as the grade levels increase, with the largest difference occurring at the 10th grade level – 61 percent pass statewide compared to 49 percent in La Frontera.

#### ARIZONA ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

As of this writing, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) has posted 2003 AYP determinations by school, but not by district. The data below compare La Frontera to Arizona by the number of schools meeting the AYP requirements in 2003. The schools were organized by their associated district identification codes, which determined whether or not they are in La Frontera.

TABLE 3. Arizona Schools Meeting 2003 AYP by Location

	Number of Schools Meeting AYP	Total Number of Schools Evaluated	Percentage
La Frontera	77	107	72%
Arizona	1012	1291	78%

Source: Arizona Department of Education. (December 30, 2003). AYP Determinations for All Schools. <http://www.ade.az.gov/profile/publicview/aypschoollist.asp>

In 2003, schools statewide met the requirements for adequate yearly progress at a higher rate than those in La Frontera.

## CALIFORNIA

The California Standards Test (CST) is designed to measure student progress on the state's content standards in English language arts, mathematics, science, and history. Students in grades 2–11 take the English language arts portion. Although mathematics data are also reported for grades 2–11, student data beyond 7th grade are reported by individual course (e.g., algebra, pre-calculus, etc.) instead of overall mathematics performance. Given this complication, we have compared mathematics performance in La Frontera and statewide only through grade 7.

CST performance levels include advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, and far below basic. For purposes of this report, we define “percent passing” as those scoring at the proficient and advanced levels. This is in keeping with California’s decision to use “proficient or above” for accountability purposes under NCLB.<sup>29</sup> (The State Board of Education has not yet been definitive about its cut point for meeting state standards.)

TABLE 4. 2003 CST Mathematics Passing Rates (%) by Grade and Location<sup>30</sup>

Grade Level	California	La Frontera (0–20 miles)	Difference
2	53	53	0
3	46	47	1
4	45	43	-2
5	35	33	-2
6	34	30	-4
7	30	29	-1

TABLE 5. 2003 CST English Language Arts Passing Rates (%) by Grade and Location<sup>31</sup>

Grade Level	California	La Frontera (0-20 miles)	Difference
2	36	39	3
3	33	35	2
4	39	40	1
5	36	35	-1
6	36	36	0
7	36	35	-1
8	30	30	0
9	38	37	-1
10	33	32	-1

Source: California Department of Education. (December 10, 2003). California Standards Test [State Report]. <http://star.cde.ca.gov/star2003/viewreport.asp>.

#### CALIFORNIA STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- » **La Frontera students pass mathematics at lower rates, except in grades 2 and 3.** In mathematics, La Frontera 2nd and 3rd graders are passing at rates at or slightly above the state levels. However, in grades 4-7, students statewide outpace those in La Frontera.
- » **The gap in mathematics performance is greatest at the upper primary and middle school levels.** From 3rd to 4th grade and from 5th to 6th grade, the passing rate gap increases. In comparing all other grades, the gap stays the same or decreases.
- » **The mathematics gap is the largest in 6th grade.** In grade 6, 34 percent of students pass the mathematics portion of the CST, while 30 percent of students at the border pass the same test.
- » **La Frontera ELA passing rate is comparable to that statewide.** In English language arts, La Frontera student performance is similar to that statewide. In fact, in grades 2, 3, and 4, La Frontera passing rates are slightly higher than statewide rates.

#### CALIFORNIA ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

The California Department of Education provides 2003 district-level AYP data. The state files include a variable that indicates whether a district has met all of the AYP requirements as defined in the state's accountability workbook. Schools and districts use these data to determine if they face NCLB sanctions. Below is a comparison of the La Frontera district data to those of districts statewide.

TABLE 6. California Districts Meeting 2003 AYP by Location

	Number of Districts Meeting AYP	Total Number of Districts Evaluated	Percentage
La Frontera	8	29	28%
California	428	1039	41%

Source: California Department of Education. (December 19, 2003). 2003 AYP Phase I [Adequate Yearly Progress Data Files]. <http://ayp.cde.ca.gov/datafiles.html>; data for "Type=District" designations (includes County Offices)

According to state data for 2003, districts statewide greatly outpace those in La Frontera in meeting AYP.

## NEW MEXICO

The TerraNova test in New Mexico assesses students in grades 3–9 in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. No district-level, subject-specific scores (e.g., 3rd grade mathematics) were reported by the New Mexico Public Education Department. The data reported are the median percentile scores of the total district score. The total district score is a composite of mathematics, reading, and language arts.

TABLE 7. 2001 CTBS5/TerraNova Median Percentile Scores

Grade Level	New Mexico	La Frontera (0–20 miles)	Difference
3	56	50	-6
4	56	53	-3
5	55	49	-6
6	50	47	-3
7	50	47	-3
8	55	50	-5
9	50	43	-7

Source: The Accountability Report, Indicators of the Condition of Public Education in New Mexico 2000–2001, New Mexico Department of Education, March 2002.

## NEW MEXICO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- » **La Frontera students score below statewide levels.** The median percentile scores along the border are consistently lower than those statewide.
- » **The differences are greatest in grades 3, 5, and 9.** New Mexico's La Frontera primary grade students do not necessarily fare better than middle and high school students on New Mexico's standardized test. In fact, the largest gaps in performance occur at two primary grades – 3rd and 5th – and at 9th grade, the only high school grade reported.

## NEW MEXICO ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

The New Mexico Public Education Department has posted 2003 ratings designating schools as either probationary, meeting standards, exceeding standards, or exemplary. For this analysis, all schools in the latter three categories were designated as meeting standards, exceeding standards, or exemplary. (Because New Mexico is in the process of establishing a new accountability system and statewide assessment, these designations stand in place of AYP determinations.)

TABLE 8. New Mexico Schools Meeting 2003 Standards by Location

	Number of Schools Meeting Standards	Total Number of Schools Evaluated	Percentage
La Frontera	31	38	82%
New Mexico	680	740	92%

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department. (October 16, 2003). 2003–2004 School Ratings. <http://www.sde.state.nm.us/div/ais/si/web.03.ratings.page.htm>

These provisional data suggest that schools in La Frontera are meeting standards at a lower rate than schools statewide. It remains to be seen if this gap persists once AYP determinations are released for New Mexico schools.

## TEXAS

Beginning with the 2002–2003 school year, the Texas Education Agency replaced the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) with the more rigorous Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). TAKS measures student progress on the statewide curriculum in mathematics in grades 3–11, reading in grades 3–9, and English language arts (ELA) in grades 10 and 11, in addition to three other subjects. TAKS is also administered in Spanish at grades 3–6, but the data reported here are from the English administration. Texas's performance levels include "did not meet the standard," "met the standard," and "commended performance." The data below reflect the percent of students in the "met" and "commended" categories.



TABLE 9. 2003 TAKS Mathematics Passing Rates (%) by Grade and Location<sup>32</sup>

Grade Level	Texas	La Frontera (0–20 miles)	Difference
3	91	88	-3
4	88	84	-4
5	86	84	-2
6	79	71	-8
7	73	65	-8
8	73	64	-9
9	65	53	-12
10	74	66	-8
11	69	58	-11

TABLE 10. 2003 TAKS Reading (and ELA) Passing Rates (%) by Grade and Location

Grade Level	Texas	La Frontera (0–20 miles)	Difference
3	90	84	-6
4	86	82	-4
5	80	76	-4
6	86	79	-7
7	88	82	-6
8	89	85	-4
9	82	74	-8
10 (ELA)	73	65	-8
11 (ELA)	70	63	-7

Source: TAKS 2003 AEIS State Report, Texas Education Agency, December 2003.

#### TEXAS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- » **Fewer La Frontera students pass mathematics and reading.** La Frontera students consistently pass the TAKS mathematics and reading assessments at rates lower than students statewide.
- » **Fewer La Frontera students pass English language arts.** In the 10th and 11th grades, students at the border are passing the ELA assessment at rates lower than that of students statewide.
- » **The gap in mathematics performance is greatest in middle and high school.** From grade 6 through grade 12, statewide pass rates in mathematics significantly outpace those in La Frontera. These rates stand in stark contrast to those of the primary grades – in 5th grade the difference between La Frontera student passing rates and that of the state is 2 percentage points, while in 6th grade this difference jumps to 8 percentage points.

» **Mathematics and reading gaps are largest in 9th grade.** The mathematics performance gap is most pronounced in 9th grade where 65 percent of students statewide are passing, compared to 53 percent of students at the border. The reading performance gap is also greatest in 9th grade, where 82 percent of students statewide pass, compared to 74 percent in La Frontera.

TEXAS ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

Texas education data provide a comprehensive picture of the number of districts meeting AYP requirements in 2003.

TABLE 11. Texas Districts Meeting 2003 AYP by Location

	Number of Districts Meeting AYP	Total Number of Districts Evaluated	Percentage
La Frontera	54	58	93%
Texas	1001	1038	96%

Source: Texas Education Agency. (December 30, 2003). 2003 Adequate Yearly Progress [District and State Data Tables]. <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ayp/2003/index.html>.

A large majority of districts both in La Frontera and statewide are meeting AYP. Districts statewide only slightly outpace those in La Frontera in achieving adequate yearly progress.

*Student Achievement in La Frontera*

While it is impossible to compare achievement across states given the different assessments used, some achievement trends emerge at the border, notably:<sup>33</sup>

- » **Lower passing rates.** Multiple assessments indicate that students in La Frontera tend to have lower passing rates in mathematics than students statewide. The same is true for reading or English language arts, except in California where La Frontera student pass rates are comparable to those statewide.
- » **Middle school achievement lags.** In all four states, the gap between La Frontera and the state overall tends to increase in middle school; although in Arizona, California, and Texas, this increase occurs for only one subject – either mathematics or reading/English language arts.
- » **High school pass rates are lower.** The passing rates of high school students at the border in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas are significantly below those of students statewide. In California, English language arts pass rates at the border are comparable to those statewide; high school mathematics pass rates are not reported in a manner that allows for such comparison.

## PART 3: PROMISING PRACTICES IN LA FRONTERA

This section has two parts:

- » **Programs and strategies.** First, we report on the findings from a series of interviews with school district officials throughout the 20-mile region wherein they described the kinds of programs and strategies they are employing to address the challenges outlined in the first section of this report and improve student learning and achievement.
- » **One border district's comprehensive approach.** The broad survey of discrete programs is accompanied by an in-depth look at one representative border district that is putting an array of pieces together into a comprehensive approach that shows promise of squarely confronting an issue that is urgent throughout the U.S.: the achievement gap that shortchanges poor and minority students. In the border region, the particular focus is on improving educational opportunities and achievement for Latino students, including large numbers who live in poverty.

Building on earlier work. Commitment to improving education quality in the border region long predates NCLB. In 1994, for example, a Border Colloquy pledged to create "a binational educational system that is open, flexible, integrated, of high quality, and adapted to the region's common needs in an atmosphere of community."<sup>34</sup> It promised health and human services, staff development, and programs teaching environmental improvement, international understanding, cultural and moral traditions and values, and the skills to compete in a global economic society.

The Colloquy's organization and funding have since ceased, leaving the continuation of its efforts largely up to school districts. This section describes some of the programs and strategies that school districts in the border region are employing to improve educational opportunities and student achievement. It focuses particularly on those that directly address areas of concern raised in Parts 1 and 2.

**Methodology.** The programs and strategies discussed are drawn primarily from personal interviews with school district leaders within 20 miles of the border. Though we attempted to include a representative sample of districts, including urban and rural districts with differing enrollments and performance levels, this summary reflects the reports of those who were reachable and willing to be interviewed. The included programs, therefore, may not comprehensively represent the region. (See Appendix 2 for a list of those interviewed and some demographic information.) One person from each participating district was interviewed, usually the superintendent.

Programs described are not intended to represent "proven" practice but are included for their relevance to specific issues that characterize the border region. Most have not been

formally evaluated; correlations between the programs and student achievement could not be drawn.

The programs are organized under five NCLB goals:

1. Increasing the Achievement of Minority Students
2. Increasing the Achievement of English Learners
3. Increasing the Achievement of Migrant Students
4. Recruiting and Retaining High Quality Teachers
5. Addressing Nonacademic Issues that Affect Student Achievement

### *Programs and Strategies*

#### **1. INCREASING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MINORITY STUDENTS**

A number of programs and practices in the border region focus on the cultural mismatch between teachers and students. In WestEd's 2002 survey, 61 percent of responding superintendents within 20 miles of the border said their teacher population either does not resemble or only somewhat resembles the student population in language, ethnicity, and culture. This mismatch, they reported, contributes to low achievement among minority students as well as to difficulties retaining teachers. Problems for students result from teachers being unable to relate to students, misunderstanding culturally motivated behaviors, and/or expecting little of minority students. Moreover, the paucity of Hispanic teachers leaves students without education role models. Some non-Hispanic teachers, meanwhile, "experience culture shock," as one superintendent put it. "[They] leave as soon as they get another job."

The literature also raises concerns. Chamberlain et al. (1999), for example, describe a domino effect: A student does not meet a teacher's expectation of proper behavior (e.g., making eye contact when spoken to); the teacher interprets the behavior as uncooperativeness or lack of respect; this interpretation confirms the teacher's initial stereotype of the student being unwilling to learn; the teacher asks the student lower-order questions or otherwise does not challenge him. Sensing the teacher's low expectations, the student reinforces them. Lower achievement results.

The National Bureau for Economic Research empirically researched the lack of role models for Hispanic students in border districts.<sup>35</sup> After randomly matching students and teachers within participating schools, researchers found that after one year, students matched with teachers of the same ethnic group increased their mathematics and reading test

scores. Dee suggests the presence of a “passive teacher effect,” that is, improvement not due to a teacher’s instructional method or other behavior but to the mere presence of a same-ethnicity role model providing encouragement. The passive effects were more concentrated the more segregated the school.

Two strategies being used in La Frontera to counter such effects include binational teacher exchange programs and “grow your own” approaches to teacher recruitment and hiring.

#### BINATIONAL TEACHER EXCHANGES

These short-term programs give teachers opportunities to learn from teachers in other countries and experience teaching in a culturally different setting. The California Department of Education has run a successful U.S.-Mexico exchange program for 18 years. More recently – prompted by a U.S.-Mexico Memorandum of Understanding on Education – a number of other exchanges have been launched, involving teachers from cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago, and Dallas.<sup>36</sup> In WestEd’s 2002 survey, six districts within 20 miles of the border reported participating.

In one exchange coordinated by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) and the New Mexico State Department of Education, teachers from New Mexico and from Nuevo Leon, Mexico, spent two weeks in each others’ schools. Teachers co-taught courses, provided workshops for their colleagues on the education system and cultural norms of their home country, co-developed lesson plans, and shared teaching materials. The program ended when Colloquy funding ran out, but SEDL evaluations have shown that such programs provide American teachers with greater cultural understanding of their Mexican immigrant, migrant, and limited English students.

A lack of interest on the part of many U.S. teachers may limit these programs’ growth.<sup>37</sup> Most interested are teachers who already have a degree of cultural awareness and sensitivity. Those less aware – who might most benefit – are a harder sell. Moreover, support is difficult to sustain, since benefits tend not to be instant or easily measured.<sup>38</sup> Advocates fear that NCLB’s demands, such as the need to prepare students for testing in English, will divert resources, especially because research on the benefits of teacher exchanges may be insufficient to make the funding case.

#### “GROW YOUR OWN” TEACHERS

Increasingly common in many parts of the U.S., “grow your own” programs bring district graduates back as teachers. In La Frontera, where enrollments may be 98 percent or more Hispanic and many students are immigrants, former students are a valuable source of teachers who can provide the cultural understanding and role modeling associated with

## Programs and Strategies

Increasing the achievement of minority students.

- » Binational teacher exchanges
- » “Grow your own” teachers

Increasing the achievement of English learners.

- » Recruiting Spanish-bilingual teachers
- » Binational textbook exchange
- » Reorganization of internal school structures
- » Parent involvement

Increasing the achievement of migrant students.

- » Transfer documents
- » Technology
- » Regional coordination

Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers.

- » Financial incentives
- » Creating a better working environment
- » Partnerships with colleges and universities
- » Paraprofessionals to teachers

Addressing nonacademic issues that affect student achievement.

Partnership with:

- » Private and nonprofit organizations
- » Mexican agencies
- » U.S. local government agencies

academic achievement. They understand the experience of living in the community, immigrating, or being from immigrant families. They share students' cultural norms and can communicate with parents. The “grow your own” approach not only helps meet the challenges of steadily growing enrollments and difficult teacher recruitment but also provides a career path for students who might otherwise face scarce job prospects.

In California's Calexico Unified School District, 80 percent of teachers are Calexico graduates.<sup>39</sup> Many students go to the nearby community college upon graduation, transferring to San Diego State University to receive teacher credentials. They do their student teaching in Calexico then return for permanent teaching positions. The district's assistant superintendent attributes the high percentage of students following this path to strong family ties in the area (including nearby Mexico), as well as to cultural family values.

Often, districts create incentives to attract students back as teachers. The Ysleta Independent School District in Texas offers credentialed former students a starting salary equivalent to that of

a third-year teacher.<sup>40</sup> Other districts offer scholarships and/or collaborate with local colleges and universities to structure a pipeline. Santa Cruz Elementary, a remote and rural district in Arizona, partners with the University of Arizona to encourage its students and others in the community to pursue teaching careers. The University offers teaching preparation via distance learning, using satellite and the Internet, to alleviate the burden of traveling long distances to reach a campus. Half of the teachers credentialed by this program in its first year stayed to teach in the district.<sup>41</sup>

A nationwide evaluation of “grow your own” programs in 1992 conducted by Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. (RNT) found a 38 percent minority participation rate – nearly three times the comparable rate in teaching overall. In a second RNT evaluation in 1995, that rate was 64 percent. RNT did not examine the quality of participating teachers, but did note that “grow your own” programs are increasingly employing models consistent with the research on effective teacher training, including hands-on and experiential learning from the outset. In a survey conducted by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) in the Midwest, 59 percent of respondents called such programs “moderately successful” in recruiting high quality teachers; 39 percent found them “very successful.”<sup>42</sup>

## 2. INCREASING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

NCLB calls for all English learners to be tested in English – and make adequate yearly progress – once they have attended U.S. schools for three years. Common to all border districts is a need to support English learners with appropriate instruction, textbooks, structures, and parent involvement.

### RECRUITING SPANISH-BILINGUAL TEACHERS

Many border districts seek teachers fluent in Spanish and English, especially to support the many older immigrant students who struggle with grade-level instruction, due to limited prior schooling and weak literacy skills, and migrant students who travel between Mexico and the U.S.

Strategies cited above for enhancing cultural understanding, particularly “grow your own” programs, may also be used to help train and recruit Spanish-speaking teachers. Another option is recruiting teachers from Mexico. This is being tried in Calexico, where the school district teams with the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (in Calexico's sister city, Mexicali) to conduct outreach activities for Mexican teachers. Two to three times a year, Calexico's director of personnel travels to the university to inform Mexican teachers about opportunities in Calexico and how to earn U.S. teaching credentials. Teachers there learn how to demonstrate equivalency with their Mexican credentials and make themselves marketable in the U.S. They get information on the processes for teacher certification and obtaining work visas in California. Calexico has hired numerous teachers this way, particularly bilingual mathematics and science teachers (areas of acute shortage) and Spanish-speaking speech therapists. The district is looking into providing financial support to help teachers pursue California credentials.

Beyond identifying teachers fluent in English, recruiting from Mexico requires much coordination. It may involve creating understandings between universities on both

sides of the border, facilitating Mexican teachers' enrollment process in U.S. teacher preparation programs, and brokering financial assistance (for tuition, living expenses), and/or providing stipends.

#### BINATIONAL TEXTBOOK EXCHANGE

Border districts that need bilingual teachers also need bilingual materials. Older students coming into the school system must learn content while learning the language, making Spanish textbooks critical. But appropriate textbooks in Spanish can be expensive.

A few districts have book exchange programs with Mexican agencies. Through the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad, organized by the Mexican Department of Foreign Relations, consulates in the U.S. arrange for free Spanish textbook distribution to U.S. schools and districts. Chula Vista Elementary District in California, for example, receives thousands of Spanish textbooks each year through the Mexican Consulate in its area.<sup>43</sup> Books are not available in all subjects, however, and some do not match the curricula.

A U.S. Department of Education evaluation of textbook exchange programs nationwide found that besides aiding students' language transition, the books are used in parent literacy programs and, to a lesser extent, in professional development. Interviews with state education directors indicate general satisfaction with the program. No evidence emerged about the effects on student achievement.

#### REORGANIZATION OF INTERNAL SCHOOL STRUCTURES

According to a report from the Urban Institute, students with limited or no English skills arriving in American middle or high schools need four to five years to become proficient in English.<sup>44</sup> Some districts have tried to telescope language learning by creating more language instruction time. Approaches include lengthening the school day or year for English learners. Most commonly, however, districts add after-school, Saturday, or summer sessions.

One problem, given teacher shortages, is finding extra staff or extra time from existing staff. Interviews revealed that some districts are instead supporting English learners by using time differently – for example, by encouraging increased collaboration among teachers. In traditional staffing, teachers who work with limited English students are in a separate department, teaching separate classes, having little overlap with teachers of mainstream students. But since many students need to master content and language simultaneously, there is a move toward more team teaching and staff communication. Superintendent Hector Madrid of El Paso Unified School District says the first step is to



"simply get everyone together." Rather than bilingual education being like a department in itself, all teachers in El Paso are brought together for curriculum and professional development.<sup>45</sup> In Palominas School District in Arizona, specialists in English as a Second Language team teach with mainstream teachers.<sup>46</sup>

Other schedule-changing options being tried or considered include block scheduling and year-round schooling. Block scheduling maintains the same total number of hours in a school day but blocks classes into just four periods, each with extended time. In some models, only academic classes are blocked. This type of scheduling gives English learners longer periods for instruction in both content and language. A Texas study of schools (including border schools) using block scheduling found overall improvements in grades, but mixed results in terms of attendance and dropout/graduation rates.<sup>47</sup>

Year-round schooling spreads the school year over the 12-month calendar, replacing the long summer break with shorter ones throughout the year. Total school days are the same, but there is less opportunity for English learners to lose language skills. One consideration, cautioned an Arizona superintendent, is that classrooms without air conditioning can be unbearable.

#### PARENT INVOLVEMENT

To receive Title III funding under NCLB, schools and districts must implement effective outreach to parents of EL students, informing them how they can be involved in helping their children learn English, achieve at high levels in core academic subjects, and meet challenging academic standards. These requirements reflect the findings from numerous research studies linking parent involvement with improved student achievement.<sup>48</sup>

To support parent involvement, Chula Vista, California, offers immigrant parents English as a Second Language classes, requiring, in turn, that parents tutor their children in the concepts they learn in the class. Several districts also have family literacy programs wherein teachers and other mentors visit families in their homes to provide material and training for families reading together, even in languages other than English.

In Calexico, where 75 percent of students are English learners, parents of students in grades K, 6, and 9 – the grades before students advance to elementary, middle, and high schools, respectively – must participate in four hours of training on various topics before their children take part in grade advancement ceremonies. Though students can advance even if their parents do not follow through, the importance of the ceremonies to the families and the students is reflected in a 98 percent parent participation rate. At the kindergarten level, parents learn how to support literacy at home; in 6th grade, the focus is gang prevention and recognizing the signs of gang involvement; and for 9th grade,

they are informed about high school course options, preparation needed for college, how to read GPAs, and other issues such as pregnancy, drug, and alcohol prevention. Moreover, if a student is expelled for any reason, the parent must participate in 22 hours of training on discipline plans before the student can return.

A pilot program in El Paso, Texas, takes the approach of giving computers to parents (35 so far) in exchange for participation in parent involvement training, including literacy support and parent responsibilities.

### 3. INCREASING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MIGRANT STUDENTS

Migrant students face the challenges of being English learners while also having very discontinuous educational experiences. Though migrant students spend less time in school and usually change schools and/or districts, NCLB measures their educational progress by the same state content and performance standards that apply to all other children. They are not held to AYP expectations, but their scores need to be disaggregated and reported.

Several programs already described are intended, in part, to benefit migrant students. For example, some teacher exchange programs are supported by the federal Binational Migrant Education Program (BMEP) under Title I. Through state and regional migrant education offices, BMEP also disseminates information and sponsors conferences to encourage binational coordination and dialogue on migrant education issues. State migrant education offices also coordinate efforts with consulates and universities in Mexico and work with the Secretaría de Educación Pública for teacher and textbook exchanges.

Student data transfer is a crucial part of ensuring educational consistency for migrant students. Under NCLB, the U.S. Department of Education must help states determine the minimum amount of data on migrant students that each district receiving BMEP funds should maintain, as well as help states develop information systems by 2005.<sup>49</sup> Each education agency must share its migrant student information with other education agencies free of charge.

Other strategies for supporting migrant student success in border districts include the use of transfer documents, technology, and regional coordination:

#### TRANSFER DOCUMENTS

Initiated by Mexico, transfer documents provide a way for migrant students to bring their education histories with them from school to school so they can be placed in appropriate classes. In English and Spanish, these documents contain student demographic and coursework data. They also include grades and teacher comments and suggestions. Missing, however, are course descriptions, meaning that teachers trying to piece together

a student's education history cannot tell what material was covered and in how much depth.<sup>50</sup> Mexico's national curriculum helps, but differing curricula in U.S. school districts creates a challenge. Other problems include parents losing the documents. Educators sometimes have to go to the Mexican Consulate for copies.<sup>51</sup>

## TECHNOLOGY

A program co-sponsored by the University of Texas and Microsoft provides coursework – aligned with the TAKS assessment – that students can complete any place, any time. Instruction and grading are done by telephone, Internet, and email. Students can access secondary coursework and various educational programs on the Internet, and Microsoft provided laptops and coursework on disks to mobile secondary students.

A similar program was the now-inactive ESTRELLA, offered for five years through the Office of Migrant Education in Texas and several other states. High school students were given laptops, from which they dialed toll-free numbers to access a distance learning Web site. Through email and Internet sites, they kept in touch with online mentors from the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio. Though expensive – the five-year cost to serve 35 students was \$400,000 – the approach appears effective. Only 50 percent of migrant students nationwide graduate from high school, but 100 percent of those enrolled in ESTRELLA in 1999 graduated, and 80 percent of those continued on to postsecondary education.<sup>52</sup>

A Mexico-sponsored program, Telesecundaria, uses satellite linkages to help Mexican migrant middle- and secondary-school students stay on the Mexican curricular track, even while in the U.S. The Secretaría de Educación Pública offers a two-week training course for American teachers and paraprofessionals (fully funded, with the exception of travel costs). They then return to their U.S. classrooms and link to a library of Mexican curricula via satellite, with a Mexican teacher giving instruction. This teacher offers lessons in various subjects to students intending to return to Mexico. The American teacher or paraprofessional assists in the class, and students can use materials provided by the Secretaría. Currently, the program is available throughout Texas and in some parts of Oklahoma. One challenge is to find ways to align Telesecundaria with U.S. standards and NCLB.

The primary drawback of all technology-based migrant education programs is cost. Partnerships with other states and organizations are important, as is coordination between states that tend to share migrant students.

## REGIONAL COORDINATION

Because staff at state migrant education offices administer an array of services (e.g., binational teacher exchanges, health screening, bus passes, parent education, after-school tutoring), they often develop personal relationships with the families they serve and attempt to connect them with the services of other community agencies. Some school districts take advantage of the opportunity to collaborate on these efforts. In Texas, El Paso School District personnel work with regional office staff to identify needs. Being a large district, El Paso is able to help fund programs, which are then coordinated and run by staff at the regional office. This helps reduce district/region redundancy and is also a way to make services available to districts with fewer migrant students that cannot afford migrant programs on their own.

## **4. RECRUITING AND RETAINING HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS**

Several programs and strategies already described also have the goal of recruiting high quality teachers. Programs that recruit bicultural or bilingual teachers can also attract high quality teachers in general. "Grow your own" and international recruitment programs can facilitate credentialing and content-specific degrees to meet the NCLB requirements.

Many districts provide teachers and paraprofessionals with additional training or education. Often, however, districts close to the border have trouble retaining good teachers. Several reported that teachers leave for neighboring states or move north for better working conditions and better pay. Strategies for addressing these issues include financial incentives, improving working environments, cooperative efforts with colleges and universities, and helping paraprofessionals become teachers:

## FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

As mentioned earlier, financial incentives are sometimes part of "grow your own" programs wherein scholarships may be given for further teacher education or higher salaries offered to students who return to teach. Such incentives may also be offered to existing teachers and paraprofessionals who need to return to school for more training. State or university loan forgiveness programs, freeing teachers of their loans if they teach in areas of severe shortage, benefit border districts. Districts have also tried offering signing bonuses, though one Texas district ended the practice because it lowered morale among those hired before the bonuses were offered.

Some districts offer housing units or subsidies, since many border areas face problems with housing shortages or quality. One remote Arizona district provides free daily transportation for teachers who live some distance away.

### CREATING A BETTER WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Financial incentives alone are insufficient for attracting high quality teachers, said most district administrators interviewed. A critical variable is working conditions. Several of those interviewed spoke of upgrading facilities. As a New Mexico superintendent said, the effort to recruit bilingual teachers goes for naught if the prospect of teaching long-term in portable classrooms drives them away.<sup>53</sup>

In an effort to compete with larger, wealthier urban districts, several rural districts in La Frontera reported trying to catch up technologically by investing in computers, Internet connections, educational software, and distance learning technology for teachers and students. For example, Douglas School District in Arizona, where only 16 of the 260 teachers have ever been on the Internet,<sup>54</sup> is working to get all teachers computers and Internet connections. Several districts noted that high tech connectedness is not only good for teaching and learning but also mitigates rural isolation.

### PARTNERSHIPS WITH COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

For coursework and training to meet NCLB's teacher and paraprofessional standards, districts look to local universities and community colleges. Many pay tuition and other expenses for teachers and paraprofessionals, along with providing the necessary time off, which often mean hiring substitute teachers. Some develop joint agreements with higher education institutions wherein teacher candidates do their student teaching in that district – a means of recruiting them as permanent teachers. Such partnerships can be coupled with "grow your own" programs: the district offers incentives for high school students to enroll in a college's teacher preparation program; the college helps encourage candidates to return to the district to teach. In NCREL's Midwest study, 49 percent of districts with college or university partnerships rated these as "very successful" for recruiting high quality teachers.<sup>55</sup>

### PARAPROFESSIONALS TO TEACHERS

Palominas (AZ), Harlingen (TX), El Paso (TX), and other districts have programs that provide scholarships for paraprofessionals interested in continuing their education and becoming certified teachers. They look to models such as the 12-year-old "Paraprofessional to Teacher Pipeline" project in the Los Angeles Unified School District.<sup>56</sup> Organized by the Center for Multilingual, Multicultural Research at the University of Southern California and funded initially by the Ford Foundation, the project's specific objective is to streamline the path for Latino paraprofessionals who want to become certified bilingual teachers. The project recognizes that funding alone may be insufficient; paraprofessionals often face social and familial constraints, requiring comprehensive support.

Participating are four universities, three school districts, the county office of education, and labor unions representing paraprofessionals and teachers. The unions identify schools with a reputation for promoting paraprofessionals to teachers and provide training for state certification tests; the universities designate faculty as mentors and advisors who provide academic and social counseling; the county office provides training for the paraprofessionals and teachers on working together through the process; the school districts provide student teaching placement and permanent teaching opportunities. Paraprofessionals receive financial assistance for coursework, transportation, child care, and other needs associated with their continued education.

Roughly 300 have participated; 90 percent are now certified teachers; 80 percent are certified bilingual teachers.<sup>57</sup> Administrators say that these teachers meet NCLB's quality standards.

## **5. ADDRESSING NONACADEMIC ISSUES THAT AFFECT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

Student physical and mental health, as well as a safe and supportive learning environment, are important factors in academic achievement.<sup>58</sup> Immigrant or migrant status, poverty, and, in some cases, isolation can severely restrict some La Frontera families' ability to provide the health care and other services their children need. In many cases, parents rely on school districts to fill the gaps. Border districts in or near large cities such as El Paso or San Diego have the benefit of many community-based medical and other services for students and their families. Other districts, however, have to devise ways of making these services more accessible to families.

"How do we address issues of attendance, which is in fact a proxy for access to health care?" asked Chula Vista Assistant Superintendent Dennis Doyle. He describes the common scenario of a child with an earache that goes untreated due to lack of health insurance. The infection worsens to the point of requiring emergency room treatment. Lost school days are an education problem; the cost of emergency versus preventive treatment is a health care problem. It makes sense, then, for health providers and educators serving the same families to collaborate.

To help families deal with health needs, border districts work to create school-community partnerships with private and nonprofit providers as well as Mexican and local U.S. government agencies:

### PARTNERSHIPS WITH PRIVATE AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

In Chula Vista, the school district collaborated with the hospitals and the city, launched a capital campaign, and raised money to custom build a mobile pediatric unit that helps

allay the challenges for all concerned. Doyle reports that some hospitals lose up to a million dollars a month due to expensive emergency care. "We look at their problem. They can't resolve it alone. We look at our attendance problem. We can't resolve it alone." The mobile clinic now pulls up to each of Chula Vista Elementary's five schools with the highest percentage of children lacking medical coverage. Doyle reports a decrease in the number of children getting emergency care.

Chula Vista, in fact, engages in multiple partnerships. The district is part of the Collaborative Coordinating Council of roughly 150 organizations, including Sea World and the YMCA. Some of the Council's activities are aimed directly at increasing educational opportunities; many also address health and social services.

Other districts, such as Animas, New Mexico, have also partnered with hospitals or local nonprofit organizations to set up health clinics on campus or provide mobile health and dental units. Many also have family resource centers where mental health workers, social services workers, and other resources are provided by local agencies housed at the school sites.

Valuable as they are, interagency collaborations in the border region involve the same formidable challenges reported elsewhere, including the need to align the missions and goals of different agencies and to share resources across agencies.

#### PARTNERSHIPS WITH MEXICAN AGENCIES

The binational partnerships that facilitate teacher and textbook exchanges can also help meet student health needs. Douglas Unified School District in Arizona, where many students of Mexican origin have diabetes, worked with the Mexican Consulate to form a binational soccer team that encourages more physical activity among these students.

#### PARTNERSHIPS WITH U.S. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Douglas Unified also works with the Douglas city manager and the city Parks and Recreation Department to provide physical education classes and equipment for students. Chula Vista Elementary in California, responding to safety issues and juvenile crime, partners with the city to employ specially trained police officers who work full-time in the schools. The school district and the city split the cost.

Though these particular programs have not been evaluated, studies elsewhere show that community connections and shared services have a positive effect on student achievement.<sup>59</sup> And NCLB urges inter-agency collaboration "to the extent feasible and necessary."<sup>60</sup> But questions about long-term sustainability and the quality of the services that tend to be provided are still largely unanswered.

## *One Border District's Comprehensive Approach*

To be effective, the types of strategies and programs reported by border districts clearly need to be part of a comprehensive whole. This section, therefore, looks in-depth at one border district whose approach to putting the pieces together holds promise for student success.

**Methodology.** We developed several criteria for identifying an appropriate district. The district needed to be representative of districts within 20 miles of the border in terms of demographics as well as socioeconomic variables. Moreover, the district's approach needed to be comprehensive to support successful practice at the district, school, and classroom levels. Importantly, there needed to be indicators from student achievement and/or other performance-based data that the district was indeed improving student opportunities and, particularly, achievement. Finally, given the overwhelmingly Latino student population of the border region and the achievement gap that so frequently constrains Latino (and African American) students, we also sought a district that was specifically attending to areas in which Latino students often get short shrift. These include ensuring:<sup>61</sup>

- » sufficient instructional time (e.g., via measures that bolster attendance and reduce the dropout rate as well as effective use of time during the school day).
- » intellectual rigor (e.g., throughout the regular program, as well as through access to enrichment opportunities and AP courses).
- » informed parents (i.e., parents of high school students, and, ideally, of middle school students, are informed about college admission requirements and the succession of rigorous courses needed, year by year, for students to be able to complete those requirements).
- » well-prepared teachers (i.e., teachers equipped to teach rigorous coursework and employ culturally sensitive practices and effective strategies for teaching English learners).
- » a culture of high expectations for all students.

To identify an appropriate district, we examined district data and also contacted educators and consultants in the border region, seeking nominations. Because time and resources would only allow us to report on one district among the four states, we have made the district anonymous, disguising details while keeping the philosophy, structure, and strategies of the approach intact.



## XYZ DISTRICT: HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND A COLLEGE GUARANTEE

Serving approximately 40,000 7th through 12th graders, the XYZ High School District<sup>62</sup> ranges over some 250 square miles and stretches from the Mexican border north to the edge of a large metropolitan area. Of its 25 schools, 12 are high schools and 11 are middle or junior high schools. XYZ is a "typical" border district in that some 70 percent of students are Hispanic. (Another 15 percent are white, 9 percent are Filipino, and 5 percent are African American.) Language is clearly an issue: More than a quarter of students are English learners; nearly half speak a language other than English at home. And, as in most border regions, poverty is arguably a bigger factor than language or ethnicity. Nearly half of the district's students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch; 17 schools are designated Title I.

Unlike some border districts, XYZ encompasses a socioeconomic range. Spanning seven communities, the district includes several pockets of relative affluence and slices of middle America as well as areas where more than 80 percent of students live in poverty and speak little English. Since many of its Latino students are second, third, or fourth generation Americans, only in some schools does the issue of bridging cultures with Mexico loom large. Yet, as in many border districts, Spanish and English as well as cultural traditions are maintained on both sides of the border as families travel back and forth, communicate, and participate in shared recreational and social activities. Border-spanning extended families also can make for considerable student mobility: When economic times are tough, many retreat to Mexico where the cost of living is lower.

For those in charge at XYZ, the border location is much less an issue per se than the district's being largely poor and majority Latino. As Superintendent Jim Karson notes, Latinos are becoming the majority population in several U.S. states, and the future will depend on how today's young Latinos fare. "It's not in society's interest to have the mainstream not doing well," he points out. "In XYZ, we recognized this earlier because of our geography, our proximity to Mexico."

Karson took the district helm nine years ago. Acutely aware that Latino students nationwide tend to be on the short end of the achievement gap, he quickly initiated a multi-faceted approach. The idea — now being incorporated into state and federal policies — is to treat no population differently, but instead operate everything around a set of rigorous standards and indicators that apply to all students in all grades. Stated cornerstones of XYZ's approach are a communitywide culture of high expectations for every student, internal collaboration and teamwork among faculty and staff, and a range of external collaborations and partnerships. Moreover, district leaders are committed to ensuring that data drive all decisions.

The challenge in addressing multiple aspects of school reform is focus – that is, avoiding having so much going on that none of the initiatives can be effective. Unlike most districts, border or otherwise, XYZ was able to put in place what people in the district call a “linchpin” that has strong potential for pulling all the pieces together. Four years ago, the district entered into an agreement under which any XYZ student who maintains a B average from 7th through 12th grades and completes the range of rigorous courses required for entry into the state's university system is guaranteed a slot at the local campus of that system. More than that, qualifying students unable to pay receive scholarships.

So, while state accountability measures and now the federal No Child Left Behind act provide “sticks,” XYZ has a carrot. “You want to go to college? We have a place for you,” the superintendent now tells 7th graders and their parents. “Can't afford it? Your tuition will be taken care of. All you have to do is work hard.”

#### LAYING FOUNDATIONS: COMMUNITY SETS GOALS

Upon his arrival in 1995, Karson called the first of what would be an annual series of communitywide Education Summits. From that initial summit came a set of five overarching goals that the community agreed would drive the district:

- » Develop rigorous academic standards that prepare students for college and/or employment.
- » Integrate parents and community members as education partners.
- » Target skills that prepare students for the high-tech, multicultural 21st century.
- » Create a safe and supportive learning environment.
- » Establish overall district responsibility based on student performance.

Summit participants also developed 15 performance indicators against which to measure progress toward the goals. These indicators set specific benchmarks, such as increasing by 25 the number of students who will enter state universities or equivalent institutions annually, increasing the number of SAT takers by 10 percent each year, and increasing the number of 8th grade students taking algebra I by 10 percent annually. Benchmarks are also spelled out for standardized test scores, attendance, and level of AP enrollments. All this meant that when state standards and accountability systems were put in place several years later, XYZ was a step ahead.

Each year some 1,000 to 1,500 people participate in the summit. Karson gives a state of the district address that includes an annual data review; the group breaks up into

school communities to define progress at each site; and feedback from participants is systematically collected. Because “we can’t do 100 things at once,” the group identifies three priorities for the coming year. Budget and accountability structures are then aligned under the priorities. Throughout the year, the district works to keep the community informed via ongoing communication that includes a regular newsletter in English and Spanish, as well as an award-winning Web site.

#### [LINCHPIN FOR SUCCESS: COLLEGE GUARANTEE](#)

In the late 1990s the local newspaper began criticizing the nearby campus of the state university system for bringing in too many students from elsewhere at the expense of slots for local students, especially Latino students. The campus’s president countered that his institution sought qualified students and was having trouble finding enough locally. Rather than merely bristling, Karson and his colleagues took those statements as a call to arms. Karson called the college president and said, “What if I could provide a steady stream of kids who qualify?”

The timing was right. Nationwide, a push for colleges to take action toward bridging their traditional distance from high schools was gathering momentum. In places with large Latino and/or African American populations, the drumbeat for college outreach gained particular volume as new accountability systems spotlighted the achievement gap that limited the prospects of these students.

With strong interest on both sides, the two leaders and their teams sat down and, over months, crafted an agreement that has changed the tenor of table conversations for many XYZ families who previously felt they had little hope of sending their sons or daughters to college. “It’s not a question of access or tuition,” Karson told a reporter, announcing not only the terms and promises made to students but also that community and business leaders, roundly supportive of the plan, had come forward and established a scholarship endowment.

The “College Agreement” was launched with 7th graders in 2001 – the graduating class of 2006. Currently, it covers students through the class of 2011. Seventh graders and their families get a campus tour and a morning of seminars at the university. That equips them with a mental image of the goal as well as a grade-by-grade roadmap for getting there. Regular guideposts and support are assured along the way – including the college’s promise of tutoring and mentoring throughout the four college years. “It’s not about entering college,” says Karson. “It’s about completing it.”

Each student signs an actual contract that is also signed by a parent, the principal, and the president of the university. From 7th grade on, a progress report goes home to parents

every six weeks, noting whether the student is on track; if not, sources of extra help are promoted. Once students are in high school, each semester's report card notes the student's status in terms of fulfilling college-bound requirements – again with the intent of helping students stay on track.

Students don't have to go to the partnership college, but because the intent is to prepare everyone either for college or for today's high-skills workforce – with no need for remediation – the goal is that every student takes the same rigorous program. "If parents don't want that, they have to tell us," says one district official. None have yet opted out.

**What students need to do.** The specific requirements for guaranteed college admission are:

- » Have a 3.0 grade point average upon graduation.
- » Meet all course-taking requirements delineated by the state's university system.
- » Be in no need of remediation.
- » Pass the state university's Entry Math (EM) and Entry English tests (EE).
- » Participate in the College Agreement program for all six years, grades 7 through 12.

Students take the EM and EE starting in 10th grade to help identify where they most need help. By senior year, if they have scored above a given level on these tests, it doesn't matter how they do on the SAT. "Admission is not contingent on the SAT," says Superintendent Karson. "Part of what we've promised is, if you take the rigorous courses and achieve at the 3.0 level, you don't need to take as many tests."

On the scholarship front, an Education Foundation has formed to administer and continue building on the \$2 million raised so far, some of it from past district graduates who have gone on to business success.

**What the district needs to do.** From the district's perspective, the agreement is gutsy. It implies that every student, regardless of which school in the district he or she attends, will be offered the requisite opportunities for success. That holds implications for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and extra support services which, in turn, call for changes in areas such as alignment, professional development, scheduling, teacher distribution, and budgeting.

The needed changes are complex and particularly challenging at the high school level where college-prep content meets a border district's language proficiency issues. Yet the changes are no less than what school districts nationwide are being expected to do under

new accountability measures. XYZ's College Agreement is, as one administrator put it, "our vehicle for blazing our own trail."

The work in progress, being tackled in collaboration with university faculty, involves focusing on the following key areas:

### **Curriculum**

- » **Aligned, grades 7–12.** For students to fulfill college preparatory requirements in, for example, mathematics by 12th grade means developing "an algebraic cast of mind" in 7th grade and ensuring that students complete algebra by the end of 9th grade. The district now offers one- and two-year algebra programs. Dialogues are underway with the feeder elementary districts, and in a couple of cases the curriculum is now aligned. Minimally, the elementary districts are given XYZ's mathematics and language arts curriculum so they can imbed it into theirs.
- » **Centralized.** To ensure quality control and equal access to rigor across its comprehensive high schools, the district is implementing a tightly held, centralized curriculum focused on reading, writing, and thinking skills. "There are no islands of people doing their own thing," says one administrator. Challenges include ensuring that students such as English learners and those struggling with reading get the curriculum and get the extra help they need to succeed.

### **Assessment and reporting on student progress**

- » **Student progress reports.** Progress reports go home every six weeks. Parents and counselors receive a "snapshot in time" telling whether a student is getting a 3.0 or above in mathematics and English. It congratulates students who are doing well and encourages those falling behind to keep working. It supplies students and parents with information about how the student can get extra help. At the high school level, each student's report card each semester includes information about the student's status in completing the college prep course requirements.
- » **End-of-course exams.** The district has developed tests specifically to gauge how well students are learning the district curriculum.

### **Teacher recruitment and induction**

Leaders throughout the district recognize that teaching is key to student success.

- » **Recruitment/hiring.** The district has made a concerted effort to employ only teachers with appropriate credentials to meet the needs of the district's students. Agreements with local universities and colleges help with recruiting and preparing Spanish bilingual

teachers. Others hired have cross-cultural language and academic development certification or their hiring is contingent on earning that credential. Though enrollment growth keeps XYZ scouting for good teachers, the district's hiring needs are not excessive, in part because its teacher retention rate is strong. "We pay well and have good benefits," says an administrator. "We don't lose a lot of teachers. It's a big enough district to give teachers opportunities."

Homegrown talent has long been valued and nurtured, but in conjunction with the College Agreement, the superintendent has issued yet another guarantee: Students who join the Future Teachers USA club, complete the College Agreement program, and then complete their teacher training at the university are promised jobs in XYZ.

Like many districts, XYZ has trouble attracting good, experienced teachers to its hardest-to-staff schools. Strategies for finding funds to offer incentive pay are being explored.

» **Induction.** All novice teachers participate in a highly successful program developed by the state for beginning teacher support.

#### **Teacher and administrator professional development**

XYZ is using the College Agreement as a mechanism to ensure a strategic approach to teacher and administrator professional development – that is, to help teachers deepen their knowledge of content and learn, practice, and use instructional strategies that enable students to master rigorous coursework. The district is in its second year of implementing a districtwide approach described by administrator Carmen Ramirez as standards-driven, comprehensive, and site-based. "We expect that each site tailor-makes the district plan to fit its own needs," she explains.

Anchored in the state's standards for the teaching profession, the approach is team-driven, dual-track (involving administrators and teachers), and hinges on turning all principals and teachers into coaches. First, established leadership teams at the school sites (principals and assistant principals plus lead teachers in each department) learn skills for coaching others to excellence. They then teach those skills, by department, to the rest of the staff. The point of the coaching is to help everyone become highly skilled in the essentials – teaching standards-based content, using effective instructional strategies, and using classroom assessment to gauge and bolster learning. Cross-grade-level teams work with each other and with outside expertise to mutually build a knowledge base and raise their level of practice in each of these areas. Teachers deepen their understanding of what to do in classrooms; administrators learn what to look for. In the process of instructional dialogues, all build trust and interdependence – becoming, in effect, a learning community.

Districtwide common knowledge – of coaching skills, content, and instructional/assessment strategies – helps ensure equivalent expertise at each site, especially important in a border district in terms of strategies for teaching English learners. Tailored emphases, rather than blanket professional development offerings across the district, allow each school's faculty to focus on where they most need help. (Site priorities are spelled out in an annual action plan, geared toward achieving 15 districtwide student achievement goals.)

XYZ stresses instructional practices that it has identified from research as particularly effective with low-income, high-minority student populations. For example, all staff are learning:

- » An instructional model that incorporates explicit, direct instruction into each lesson and emphasizes monitoring whether students are understanding what's being taught. Ramirez describes this as "a starting place that will evolve to other teaching models."
- » Effective ways to use classroom assessment to diagnose whether students are learning what they need to know, identify areas where they need help, and involve students in thinking critically about what they are learning and why.
- » Instructional strategies that promote literacy and thinking skills (e.g., comparing and contrasting), and techniques and skills that help students improve academically (e.g., how to take notes and summarize).
- » Effective skills and strategies for language acquisition, with increasing focus on ensuring that every teacher in the district understands the needs of English learners, from beginning to advanced levels, across English-dominant and Spanish-dominant English learners. The district offers bilingual classes as well as structured English immersion. Teachers receive training in the SDAIE methodology (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English, often called Sheltered English). Importantly, teachers learn "differentiation" strategies – ways to help students learn content while also learning English.

Teachers get release time for planning and to observe models of good teaching in other classrooms. Moreover, teacher-to-teacher alliances have been created with professors at the university. One such link led the chair of the university's writing and rhetoric department to come to district high schools and work with teachers on how to ensure that students are well prepared for English 101 at the college.

Among the district's greatest challenges under the College Agreement is preparing teachers quickly and simultaneously for an array of shifts, including for teaching in small learning communities (see below) and teaching a rigorous curriculum to students

with a range of needs. These include students who need ongoing support transitioning from English as a Second Language classes, as well as many students who need reading instruction. Reading is a significant enough issue that the district is moving to implement a program by which all content teachers also learn to be teachers of reading.

#### **Extra academic support**

Tutoring, mentoring, summer school, Saturday school, intersession courses – XYZ students have access to all of these kinds of help to allow them to succeed under the College Agreement. Some of these supports are tailored for English learners. Others are for those struggling with a particular course or subject area.

#### **Communication with students and families**

The College Agreement implies extensive and ongoing communication with students and parents, first to inform all incoming 7th graders and their families of the college guarantee and what it entails and then to keep everyone continually apprised of student progress. This necessitates a range of high- and low-tech approaches, which include use of its Web site, its newsletter, and its annual report – the latter two in both English and Spanish. As noted above, communication on how well students are staying on track also occurs by way of progress reports every six weeks and, in high school, notations on semester report cards of the student's status in terms of completing college prep course requirements. This communication is, of course, supplemented by parent-teacher conferences. Finally, the superintendent uses the annual communitywide education summit as a major two-way communication vehicle, this past year equipping all participants with electronic devices that they used to give him instant answers to questions about awareness of the College Agreement.

#### [THE COLLEGE AGREEMENT GIVES COHESION TO A CONSTELLATION OF EFFORTS](#)

District programs that predated the College Agreement are now evaluated through the lens of their contribution to its success, and they are beefed up or de-emphasized accordingly. Meanwhile, new efforts are pursued if they hold promise of furthering the College Agreement's goals.

Efforts that lend support to the College Agreement include:

**Academic enrichment programs.** Several such efforts, adopted years ago by the district, are designed to encourage students to stay on track for college. One example is a state-funded program that provides tutoring, study skills, and college counseling to promising, low-income middle- and high school students whose parents have not gone to college. They meet each day, during an elective period, with a specially trained teacher who not



only provides extra instruction but also monitors every aspect of their school experience from homework to academic performance, and pushes them to take more challenging courses. Another such program, operated by the state's university and community college systems, trains district staff to provide extra teaching, counseling, and mentoring to students from traditionally underserved populations.

XYZ also offers an array of advanced placement (AP) courses and uses various mechanisms to encourage students to take them. District students surpass the state average of students earning college credit by scoring high enough on AP exams. In June 2003, a national magazine acknowledged this AP achievement by including three XYZ high schools on its list of the top 400 high schools nationwide (see "measuring success," below).

Participation has increased notably in Spanish AP classes, earning many students college credit. Students can also now qualify for dual language recognition by meeting multiple criteria, including passing relevant courses, to satisfy college-entry course requirements in two languages. Through a groundbreaking agreement with the Office of Education in Mexico, XYZ also offers its students the opportunity to take Baccalaurato (high school competency) exams. If they pass, they receive a Mexican high school diploma.

**Smaller learning communities.** In 2002, the district won a federal grant to create learning communities of no more than 600 students in eight of its high schools. For years, district high schools have offered juniors and seniors small learning groups in the form of career-specific academies wherein coursework revolves around real-world problems and internship experiences in such high-demand fields as marine science, international business, media and public relations, biotechnology, and engineering. Now personalized learning in smaller groups occurs throughout high school. "Now we catch kids in 9th grade," says one administrator. "They become part of a 9th and 10th grade community of 600, rather than one of 2,600." (In 10th grade, students do an "exploratory" of the academies as they plan for upper division work.)

**Averting overcrowding.** Like other growing districts, XYZ struggles to keep class sizes down. Under union rules, no class can be larger than 35. Two new schools opened this year, which helped. Being at the border, the district is also aggressive about residency verification and dis-enrolls students who prove not to be district residents.

**Achievement gap task force.** XYZ's superintendent recently became chair of a countywide task force taking action to close the achievement gap. Its target is raising the scores of Latino students on the state's high school exit exam, particularly in math, a content area of historically low achievement for these students. By way of the task force, some 40 school districts in the county have jointly pledged that all 10th graders will pass the high school exit exam by 2006. The test is given three times a year to juniors and

seniors.

In 2001-02, 68 percent of XYZ's students passed English language arts; 47 percent passed math; and 44 percent passed both.

To support the pledge, the district has established a comprehensive support network. Juniors more than 20 points away from passing get 20 hours of after-school and Saturday courses, including a skills workshop. Juniors more than 50 points away get a more intensive, semester-long course. The support includes tutoring sessions in the summer, during mid-year intersession, after school, and on Saturdays.

**Partnerships with industry.** The high school academies discussed above are carried out with industry involvement. Moreover, plans are in the works for the district to participate in an industry-led collaboration involving XYZ and institutions of higher education on both sides of the border. The intent is to prepare a highly educated, bilingual workforce for jobs, particularly managerial positions, with multinational companies locating in the border region.

**Attendance and dropout prevention.** To keep attendance up and the dropout rate down, the district works strenuously to ensure that every student is connected with an adult or peers or activities that make school relevant and compelling. These efforts range from academic outreach programs to music and performance art opportunities. Over the past five years, the dropout rate has decreased notably, especially for Latino students (see "measuring success," below).

**The arts.** In an era of school district budget cuts, the arts tend to suffer. But XYZ last year hired a visual and fine arts director to ensure the vitality of its extensive visual and performing arts programs. Art, theater, music, and dance programs reflect the rich cultural and linguistic influences in XYZ's communities. One prominent example is the mariachi bands that have become integral parts of the district's music programs, with some 600 students now participating. The mariachi program emphasizes skill and substance via a standards-based curriculum that sequentially builds the music skills of the performers. It also fulfills the performing arts requirement for entrance into the state university system. Over the last five years, mariachi ensembles from throughout the district have received national attention, performing for presidents Bush and Clinton. Using the videoconferencing capability of the district's Distance Learning Center, they have shared their music with mariachi students 1,300 miles away in another border state. Besides mariachi, the district's traditional bands and orchestras have performed on every continent except Antarctica, and its performing arts magnet school won recognition three years in a row from the Grammy Foundation (see "measuring success," below).

**Integrated services with health and social agencies.** Given the low-income status of

many district families, the district engages in collaborative efforts to support students with health and social services. In a notable example, a regional health clinic recently opened a satellite site at one of the district's high schools in a high-poverty community. There, students and families without health coverage or transportation can get health services two mornings a week. Physicians and medical residents get to know families well and have a vested interest in the community; some are graduates of the district. Besides providing needed health care, the clinic supports career paths for students and health information for the community. Prior to the clinic's opening, students were involved in its planning; they collected research on needs by surveying their peers, for example. Students have also made videos, now used by the clinic, on health issues such as one on suicide warning signs. The clinic is a partnership of the school district, a youth and family resource center, a medical residency program, a health center, and a border-area health education center.

#### MEASURING SUCCESS

Notable signs of the district's success include:

- » **More students completing college prep requirements.** In 2001-02, 33 percent of students completed these requirements with a C or better, up from 28 percent in 1998-99.
- » **More 3.0s.** The district had 300 students with a grade point average of at least 3.0 three years ago. This year the number of students in this category has tripled.
- » **Exceeding state expectations.** Over the past four years, XYZ schools have made dramatic performance gains, surpassing state achievement expectations in every grade and subject area.
- » **Students passing the high school exit exam.** In 2001, 60 percent of freshmen passed English language arts. In 2003, 75 percent of sophomores passed. In both cases students passed on their first try. As noted above, in 2001-02, 68 percent of all XYZ students passed English language arts; 47 percent passed math; and 44 percent passed both.
- » **More take algebra in 8th grade.** The district has seen a significant increase in the number of students taking algebra in 8th grade. In 2001-02, one in four students completed algebra in 8th grade, up from 17.5 percent in 1997-98.
- » **More 9th graders proficient in reading.** In 2001, a fifth of 9th graders scored at the proficient level in reading. In 2003, a third did.
- » **Dropout rate decline.** The district's dropout rate has decreased for four consecutive

years. In 2001-02, it was the lowest in district history. Rates for Latino and African American students particularly improved. Five years ago the district dropout rate for Latinos was 5.8 percent. In 2001-02, it was 1.9 percent.

- » **Focused support for English learners.** A plan is now in place that structures more support services and more focused activities to ensure what the district expects to be a 10 percent annual increase in reclassifications for English learners, using state-approved guidelines.
- » **Awards and recognition.** The most notable recent awards include:
  - » **Top high schools nationwide.** In June 2003, a national magazine published a list of the top 400 high schools nationwide, based on the number of students taking AP courses and the number passing AP exams. It included three XYZ schools – two of which serve high-minority populations.
  - » **Outstanding individual programs.** The state school boards association has given awards to XYZ every year for the past seven years for outstanding individual programs, including a library on one high school campus that serves students by day and the community by night; the marine science academy; and an education program for students who are wards of the court.
  - » **Outstanding performing arts.** The district's high school for the performing arts has been recognized by the Grammy Foundation three years running as one of the top 100 music departments among the 18,000 public high schools in the U.S. The foundation noted the school's innovative and extensive performing arts curriculum, its partnerships with professional artists, and its excellent student concert recordings.

On the College Agreement itself, Superintendent Karson notes tremendous community enthusiasm, particularly evidenced by one prominent indicator: People are moving into the district because of it. He sees the College Agreement as a means of not only lifting student prospects in XYZ, but also of modeling for other districts an approach that he feels is possible anywhere. "If we can do this in our neck of the woods," he says, "others can too."

## PART 4: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATION

Student conditions and the picture for education in La Frontera can be captured in several summary statements:

- » **The region is characterized by poverty, a prevalence of English learners, and low education levels.** Despite pockets of affluence, if the border region were the 51st state, it would rank last in per capita income and first in the numbers of school children living in poverty.<sup>63</sup> The area within 20 miles of the border includes several of the most impoverished counties in the country<sup>64</sup> and is characterized by a prevalence of English learners and low overall levels of education.
- » **The infrastructure lag creates particular dimensions of hardship.** Students are affected by the issues attendant to poverty everywhere, but in La Frontera, the inability of community institutions and infrastructure to keep pace with rapid development has added, in many cases, particular dimensions of hardship. Especially notable are health and housing problems.
- » **Adverse health conditions.** Again, if the border region were the 51st state, it would rank last in access to health care; first in the numbers of children who are uninsured; second in death rates due to hepatitis; third in deaths related to diabetes; and last in access to health care.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, recent and proposed state budget cuts will cause large numbers of children in La Frontera to lose health coverage.<sup>66</sup> Water quality problems, compounded by industrial waste and agricultural runoff, pose a major environmental health challenge, as do polluted air and toxic substances such as pesticides.<sup>67</sup> The primary infectious diseases threatening public health are tuberculosis and water- and food-borne illnesses.<sup>68</sup> Many Latino children, especially those of migrant farm workers, lack needed dental care.<sup>69</sup>
- » **Lack of affordable housing.** Due to insufficient public housing, financing assistance, and community renewal programs, many students live in substandard housing. A significant number of households are not connected to public water, sewage systems or septic tanks,<sup>70</sup> especially in rural *colonias*. Many communities have insufficient systems for water, wastewater, and municipal solid wastes.<sup>71</sup> Such living conditions magnify the risk of health problems.
- » **Student achievement levels are low.** With the exception of California, where poverty and living conditions at the border are generally less severe, student achievement in La Frontera lags behind statewide levels. And in Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico, students fare worse as they move up the grades; the higher the grade, the greater the gap in performance from the border to the state as a whole. In Arizona, 62 percent of

3rd graders pass the state's math exam – a level 5 percentage points behind the statewide average of 67 percent. By 10th grade, overall pass rates for both groups have dropped markedly – to 22 percent and 39 percent respectively – with the lag for the border students widening to 17 percentage points. In Texas, the lag is 3 percentage points in 3rd grade and 8 percentage points by 10th grade.

» **A mismatch exists between achievement levels and workplace/societal demands.**

Shifts in the border economy increasingly call for highly skilled workers, and the region's complex social and environmental concerns require knowledgeable voters and involved citizens. At the very least, there is a mismatch between achievement levels and what students need to be prepared for the emerging workplace and to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

### *Implications*

The border region is in transition. There is widespread recognition that the narrow emphasis on short-term economic growth is unsustainable and must give way to a strong emphasis on strategies for sustainable development, i.e., more concrete benefits, fewer negative effects.<sup>72</sup> The economic boom has been built largely on transitory industries that have drawn large numbers of low-skill, low-wage workers to the region but have little stake in ensuring social development and decent living conditions in its communities. NAFTA accelerated the growth trend, but did not offer communities sufficient funding or support to build their capacity to withstand its effects.

With resources lacking, investment in electricity, housing, transportation, and schools trailed increasingly behind population growth. Poverty and unemployment worsened. The water crisis grew. The results have been environmental degradation and crises in human health. Taken as a whole, these problems may threaten La Frontera with economic decline.

Yet a number of forecasters see reasons for optimism. Progress has been made on multiple fronts. An explosion of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and a rising emphasis on coalition-building between state and local governments, the private sector, and the NGO sector has begun to create a framework for making headway on environmental and health issues.<sup>73</sup> Binational institutions created under NAFTA have increased their effectiveness at working with states and border groups on environmental infrastructure projects, such as construction of new municipal water treatment systems. Community development block grants have been redirected to lessen the poverty and distressed living conditions found in the *colonias*.<sup>74</sup>

But forecasters agree that the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and improving living conditions along the border is jobs that pay a living wage. Mass creation of such jobs requires a shift from a low- to higher-level economy – a shift that is already

occurring with employment declines in industries such as agriculture, mining, textiles, and apparel manufacturing and jobs, coupled with employment *increases* in areas such as communications, health services, and advanced technology sectors.<sup>75</sup> A companion development is a greater emphasis on using new types of technology to expand production.

Broad agreement exists that this new economy and all of its potential benefits will be driven, fundamentally, by education.<sup>76</sup>

### *Recommendation: Designate the border region as an Education Enterprise Zone*

Given the mismatch between current education achievement and attainment levels and the vision of a high-level, sustainable economy replete with improved living conditions, the border region urgently requires a major infusion of innovation, energy, and resources into its public education systems. As a mechanism for generating that infusion, WestEd proposes that the school boards associations of the border states work toward having the entire U.S. region within 20 miles of the border designated an Education Enterprise Zone – a zone targeted for educational revitalization.

Launched with specially designated U.S. federal funds, the zone would be created via a public-private partnership, joining leaders of preK–postsecondary public education in the region with leaders from state and local government, industry, and the NGO sector. Its crafters would include players from each of these arenas. An Education Enterprise Zone would formally pronounce that education is the linchpin for achieving the objectives of multiple border initiatives in health, the environment, and economic development. It would spotlight education’s role as the hub of these efforts and generate the necessary political, intellectual, and financial capital needed for success.

**Defining the Education Enterprise Zone.** WestEd suggests that a critical step would be to convene the U.S. Secretaries of Education; Labor; Health and Human Services; and Housing and Urban Development with the four state governors and state and local education leaders to hammer out a definition of the Education Enterprise Zone, how it would operate, and areas of focus. Basic assumptions guiding their task would include:

» **Education is a collaborative enterprise.** The truism that schools cannot do the job alone is underscored in a region where students lack basic housing and health services. Partnerships are essential – between and among K–12 education, higher education, health care and social service providers, housing authorities, environmental coalitions, industry, and the NGO sector. The XYZ School District case study in this report provides excellent examples of how multi-dimensional partnerships can operate. A similar model is the well-known El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence – a 12-year-old example of successful data-driven systems change, funded by private philanthropies and the federal government. It has combined the resources and

ingenuity of the University of Texas (El Paso), El Paso Community College, the area's three largest school districts, and local business and civic leaders to significantly boost student achievement.<sup>77</sup> Another model, currently in development, is Project Synergy, a partnership of a Mexican university and three U.S. education institutions (a high school district, a community college, and a state university) that will collaborate with industry to develop programs that ensure graduates are prepared for the international business environment at the border.<sup>78</sup> And the Border Partners in ACTION (Border PACT) network of higher education institutions has developed a higher education agenda for action.<sup>79</sup>

- » **Political support is crucial.** For example, state and federal policymakers may grant schools and school districts within the EEZ broad discretion over use of categorical monies. Coupled with state and federal accountability requirements that push for a focus on results, discretion over spending can allow schools the flexibility needed to tailor their efforts to the specific needs of La Frontera students.
- » **The pivotal variable in the quality of education is the caliber of teaching.** The recruitment, preparation, and development of K–12 teachers in the border region is an urgent priority.
- » **At the border, the trans-national dimension cannot be ignored.** Despite separate education systems in the U.S. and Mexico, the intertwined nature of economic and community life in twin border cities calls for cross-border collaboration on education projects. Lags on either side of the border constrain progress on both sides. Previous efforts such as the 1994 Border Colloquy acknowledged this interdependency. EEZ planners will now deal with new realities, stemming from NAFTA implementation, the 1994 devaluation of the *peso* and subsequent Mexican economic recession, the more-recent U.S. recession, and Mexico's failure to use NAFTA-related economic gains to invest in education.

**Launching the Initiative.** WestEd also proposes that one way to launch the initiative is to call a border education summit. Central participants would include the U.S. cabinet secretaries mentioned above; governors and education leaders from the four states; leaders from health, environmental, and economic coalitions and from industry. Purposes of the summit would be to:

- » **Generate public urgency.** A high-profile event will generate widespread media coverage and help build an understanding that education is the hub of multiple border efforts in health, environment, and economic development. A key message would be that sustainability of all these efforts and the future viability of life in the border region are dependent on strengthening education and skill levels.



- » **Clarify the vision.** The summit will issue a vision statement (e.g., “Education 2020”), wherein students in the border region will have a high quality, cohesive education system, preK through higher education, that prepares them with the knowledge and skills needed for the workplace in a high-level economy as well as for civic participation.
  
- » **Create a Border Education Commission.** The summit will create a representative body to be responsible for specifying the initiative’s goals and benchmarks (e.g., increase by x percent the number of college-going students, reducing the dropout rate by x percent) and articulating action priorities for the EEZ’s first year. Over time, the Border Education Commission will develop criteria for EEZ projects, review proposals, and select projects to implement. It will ensure ongoing evaluation of progress.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Selected excerpts from 2000 U.S. census [online database]. Alexandria, VA: Proximity [Producer and Distributor]. Available online at: <http://www.Proximityone.com>
- <sup>2</sup> We faced certain limitations in interpreting the data. For example, in some demographic categories as well as in student achievement, the border region in California does not follow patterns evident in the other three states. California's lower overall rates of poverty and higher average test scores relative to the other states may be explained by the presence in La Frontera of San Diego – a major metropolitan area within 20 miles of the border with substantial pockets of affluence. But this hypothesis requires further research.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Ganster, P. (Ed.). (2003). *The U.S.-Mexican border environment: A roadmap to a sustainable 2020*. San Diego, CA: Southwest Center for Environmental Research and Policy. Retrieved from <http://www.scerp.org/>
- <sup>6</sup> One river, one country. (1997). *The Economist Newspaper Limited*. Retrieved from <http://www.uwec.edu/Geography/lvogeler/w188/articles/tmxm.htm>
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Magazine suggests U.S.-Mexican Border should morph into a separate country. (2001, July 24). <http://www.NewsMax.com>
- <sup>9</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*. (2002, December 4). Retrieved from <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/MM/dzm2.html>
- <sup>10</sup> Gilot, L. (2003, December 11). Delphi celebrates 25 years in Juarez. *El Paso (TX) Times*.
- <sup>11</sup> City of El Paso Web site: [http://www.ci.el-paso.tx.us/econdev/eddepd\\_i.htm](http://www.ci.el-paso.tx.us/econdev/eddepd_i.htm)
- <sup>12</sup> Ganster, P. (1997). *The U.S.-Mexico border region. In a region in transition: The U.S.-Mexico borderlands and the role of higher education* [Working paper]. Tucson, AZ: Border PACT (higher education network). Retrieved from <http://www.borderpact.org>
- <sup>13</sup> Ross, R. J. S., & Chan, A. (2002, September–October). From North-South to South-South. *Foreign Affairs*.
- <sup>14</sup> Ganster, P. (2003).
- <sup>15</sup> U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission. (2003). Data on Web site: [http://www.borderhealth.org/border\\_region.php](http://www.borderhealth.org/border_region.php)
- <sup>16</sup> Gibbs, N. (2001, June 11). A whole new world. *Time*.
- <sup>17</sup> Goldberg, R. A., & Porraz, J. M. (2002). *Water policy priorities along the United States-Mexico border*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School.
- <sup>18</sup> Population growth figures for the border region as defined by the La Paz Agreement, i.e., defined as 62.5 miles each way from the border. (See U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission, 2003, [http://www.borderhealth.org/border\\_region.php](http://www.borderhealth.org/border_region.php).)
- <sup>19</sup> Koehler, P., et al. (2002). Voices from La Frontera: Study of school districts along the United States-Mexico Border. San Francisco: WestEd. Available at [http://web.WestEd.org/online\\_pubs/lafrontera.pdf](http://web.WestEd.org/online_pubs/lafrontera.pdf)
- <sup>20</sup> This report includes data from the 2000 census, which was not available for our earlier La Frontera study.
- <sup>21</sup> Ganster, P. (2003).
- <sup>22</sup> Hennenberger, J. (2000, March). Affordable housing on the border. *Borderlines*, 8 (3).
- <sup>23</sup> Faulkner, T. (1999, December). Native communities of the Borderlands: An introduction. *Borderlines*, 7(11).
- <sup>24</sup> Hennenberger. (2000).
- <sup>25</sup> *Common Core of Data 2000–2001* [Data file]. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. No data on migrant students were available for Arizona; these percentages only reflect the student populations of California, New Mexico, and Texas.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid. No data on migrant students were available for Arizona; these percentages only reflect the student populations of California, New Mexico, and Texas.
- <sup>27</sup> Distance (0–20 miles from border) was determined from maps of district boundaries, not from responses submitted on original La Frontera Survey.

- <sup>28</sup> Difference is La Frontera minus State.
- <sup>29</sup> California Department of Education. (2003, June 3). *State of California consolidated state application accountability workbook*. Sacramento, CA: Author.
- <sup>30</sup> Distance (0–20 miles from border) was determined from maps of district boundaries, not from responses submitted on original La Frontera Survey.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Distance (0–20 miles from the border) determined from original La Frontera Survey of districts' answers to Question 1 – Distance from Border.
- <sup>33</sup> See endnote #2.
- <sup>34</sup> The Colloquy was a series of meetings and programs sponsored by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) and took place between 1994 and 2000.
- <sup>35</sup> Dee, T. (2001, August). *Teachers, race and student achievement in a randomized experiment*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- <sup>36</sup> The Memorandum of Understanding was originally signed between the U.S. Secretary of Education and his counterpart in Mexico in 1990. It has been renewed every two years since then and outlines areas of cooperation, including teacher exchanges, but no funding is attached to it.
- <sup>37</sup> Interview with Beatriz Cejo, U.S. Department of Education.
- <sup>38</sup> Interview with Victor Rodriguez, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- <sup>39</sup> Interview with Emily Palacio, Assistant Superintendent of Calexico Unified School District.
- <sup>40</sup> Interview with Hector Montenegro, Superintendent of Ysleta Independent School District.
- <sup>41</sup> Interview with David Peterson, Superintendent of Santa Cruz Elementary District.
- <sup>42</sup> Hare, D. (2001). *Effective teacher recruitment and retention strategies in the Midwest*. Naperville, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.
- <sup>43</sup> Interview with Margo Taylor, Title I Director at Chula Vista Elementary District.
- <sup>44</sup> Ruiz-de-Velasco, J., & Fix, M. (2000). *Overlooked and underserved: Immigrant students in U.S. secondary schools*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- <sup>45</sup> Interview with Hector Madrid, Superintendent of El Paso Unified District.
- <sup>46</sup> Interview with Kathy Moore, Superintendent of Palominas School District.
- <sup>47</sup> Texas Education Agency. (1999, September). Block scheduling in Texas public high schools [*Policy Research Report #13*]. Retrieved from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/prr13.pdf>
- <sup>48</sup> E.g., Adger, C. (1996). *Language minority students in school reform: The role of collaboration*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics.
- Antunez, B. (2002). *When everyone is involved: Parents and communities in school reform*. Washington, DC: National Center for Bilingual Education.
- Henderson, A., & Mapp, K. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- Henderson and Mapp analyzed 80 studies on the effects of parent involvement on student achievement and found that certain parent actions – e.g., expressing high expectations, being engaged in students' homework, and helping students prepare for college – increased student mathematics and reading achievement across races and ethnicities by as much as 30 percent.
- <sup>49</sup> WestEd is currently helping the California Department of Education's Migrant Education Office to do so.
- <sup>50</sup> Interview with Victor Rodriguez, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- <sup>51</sup> U.S. Department of Education Binational Migrant Education Program. (2001). *2000–2001 annual report*. Washington, DC: Author.
- <sup>52</sup> ESTRELLA performance report filed with the U.S. Department of Education.
- <sup>53</sup> Interview with Bill Croker, Superintendent of Deming Public School District.
- <sup>54</sup> Interview with Analize Bistone, Superintendent of Douglas School District.

- <sup>55</sup> Hare, D. (1998).
- <sup>56</sup> Described in Genzuk, M., & Baca, R. (1998). *The paraeducator to teacher pipeline*. Los Angeles: Center for Multilingual, Multicultural Research, University of Southern California.
- <sup>57</sup> Personal conversation with staff at the Center for Multilingual, Multicultural Research, University of Southern California.
- <sup>58</sup> E.g., Dryfoos, J. G. (2002); Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. (2001). *Emerging issues in school, family, & community connections*. Austin, Texas; Adger, (2000).
- <sup>59</sup> Citations in SEDL (2001) and the General Accounting Office (2000).
- <sup>60</sup> Title I, Factors Affecting Student Achievement.
- <sup>61</sup> Drawn from Tornatzky, L. G., Pachon, H. P., & Torres, C. (2003). *Closing achievement gaps: Improving educational outcomes for Hispanic children*. Los Angeles: National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators and The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute.
- <sup>62</sup> The name of the district as well as names of all individuals and certain details have been changed for purposes of anonymity.
- <sup>63</sup> U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission, citing data from the Health Resources and Services Administration. It defines the border region as within 62 miles north and south of the border. Retrieved from [http://www.borderhealth.org/border\\_region.php](http://www.borderhealth.org/border_region.php).
- <sup>64</sup> Center for Economic Development, University of Texas at San Antonio, & the Brooks Energy and Sustainability Lab. (2003). *Developing a renewable energy based economy for South Texas: A blueprint for development*. San Antonio, TX: Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, p. 20.
- <sup>65</sup> U.S.- Mexico Border Health Commission, citing data from the Health Resources and Services Administration.
- <sup>66</sup> Ku, L. & Ninvaldran, S. (2003) *Losing out: States are cutting 1.2 to 1.6 million low-income people from Medicaid, SCHIP, and Other State Health Insurance Programs*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved from <http://www.cbpp.org/12-22-03health.htm>
- <sup>67</sup> U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission. (2003). *Healthy border 2010: An agenda for improving health on the U.S.-Mexico border*. El Paso, TX: Author. p. 57. Retrieved from [http://www.borderhealth.org/files/res\\_34.pdf](http://www.borderhealth.org/files/res_34.pdf).
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- <sup>71</sup> Kelly, M. E. (2002, Fall). The border environment and the changing bilateral relationship. *Enfoque*. p. 6.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- <sup>73</sup> See, for example, Kelly, M.E. (2002); *Healthy border 2010*. (2003); and *Developing a renewable energy based economy*. (2003).
- <sup>74</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2000, December 5). *Colonias set-aside provision* [Homes & Communities]. Retrieved from <http://www.hud.gov/progdsc/colonias.cfm>
- <sup>75</sup> *Developing a renewable energy based economy*. (2003). p. 43.
- <sup>76</sup> See, for example, Kelly, M.E. (2002); and *Developing a renewable energy based economy*. (2003).
- <sup>77</sup> See El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, <http://www.epcae.org/overview.htm>
- <sup>78</sup> Rubio, C. R. (2002) *Project Synergy: International education without borders*. Tucson, AZ: Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC). Retrieved from <http://blake.montclair.edu/~cibconf/conference/DATA/Theme1/Mexico.pdf>
- <sup>79</sup> Ponton, B. C., et al. (1997). *A region in transition: The U.S.-Mexico borderlands and the role of higher education*. Tucson, AZ: Border PACT. Retrieved from <http://www.borderpact.org>.



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