



THE STATE OF LATINAS

IN CALIFORNIA



FOSTERING THE GROWTH OF LATINA LEADERSHIP



2005 Year In Review



Vision. Latinas inspiring, empowering, and engaging leadership to strengthen all communities.

Mission. HOPE is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization committed to ensuring political and economic parity for Latinas through leadership, advocacy, and education to benefit all communities and the status of women.

01 Chair and Executive Director's Message

02 Mobilizing the Political Pipeline

04 The HOPE Leadership Institute: A Political Training Ground

06 Celebrating Years of HLI Success

08 Latina Leadership Making a Difference in the Los Angeles Unified School District

12 Leadership of HOPE and 2005 Associates

ON THE COVER:

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The responsibility of Leadership is here.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Throughout California, there is talk about LEADERSHIP; what it is, who it is, lack of, and types. At HOPE, we stop asking those questions and challenge ourselves and the larger community of Latinas to step up to the plate and be leaders, for one key reason ... it is our responsibility.

HOPE's mission to ensure political and economic parity for Latinas through leadership, advocacy, and education to benefit all communities and the status of women, is imperative for the growth and advancement of California. HOPE seized this challenge eight years ago with the creation of the HOPE Leadership Institute, the first and only statewide leadership development program specifically designed for Latinas in California. The goal is to train Latinas in vital advocacy skills, enabling them to create fundamental change within their local neighborhoods to develop healthy communities across California.

As we prepared the 2005 "State of Latinas In California: Fostering the Growth of Latina Leadership" we asked the following questions: Is HOPE's training of over 250 Latinas statewide making an impact? Are there programmatic learnings and methods for improvement? Does it make a difference to have Latinas in leadership positions?

The answers to those questions, we are happy to report, are a resounding **yes**. In this report, we will give you highlights of an evaluation conducted by the University of San Francisco on the advancement of the Latinas trained by the HOPE Leadership Institute. We will also present an amazing case study highlighting three Latina leaders in Los Angeles leading the effort to ensure all students at LAUSD are prepared for college and the workforce. We hope that you use this information to inform your community, corporation and yourself about Latina leadership in California.

As we brought 2005 to a close, we reflected on some of our key accomplishments:

- Serving 1200 Latinas through Latina History Day and Latina Action Day Sacramento, providing career development workshops, policy analysis, and civic engagement opportunities.
- Serving 200 Latina youth through our Youth Leadership Through Literacy Program (YLTL), preparing them for college, engaging them in government and teaching them fundamentals of money management.
- Joining coalitions in support of the A-G curriculum, moving toward a statewide movement around high school reform and college preparedness, ensuring Latinas are prepared to enter college and graduate.
- Launching the Financial Success Program giving Latinas tools to manage their finances in order to achieve their dreams and invest in their communities.

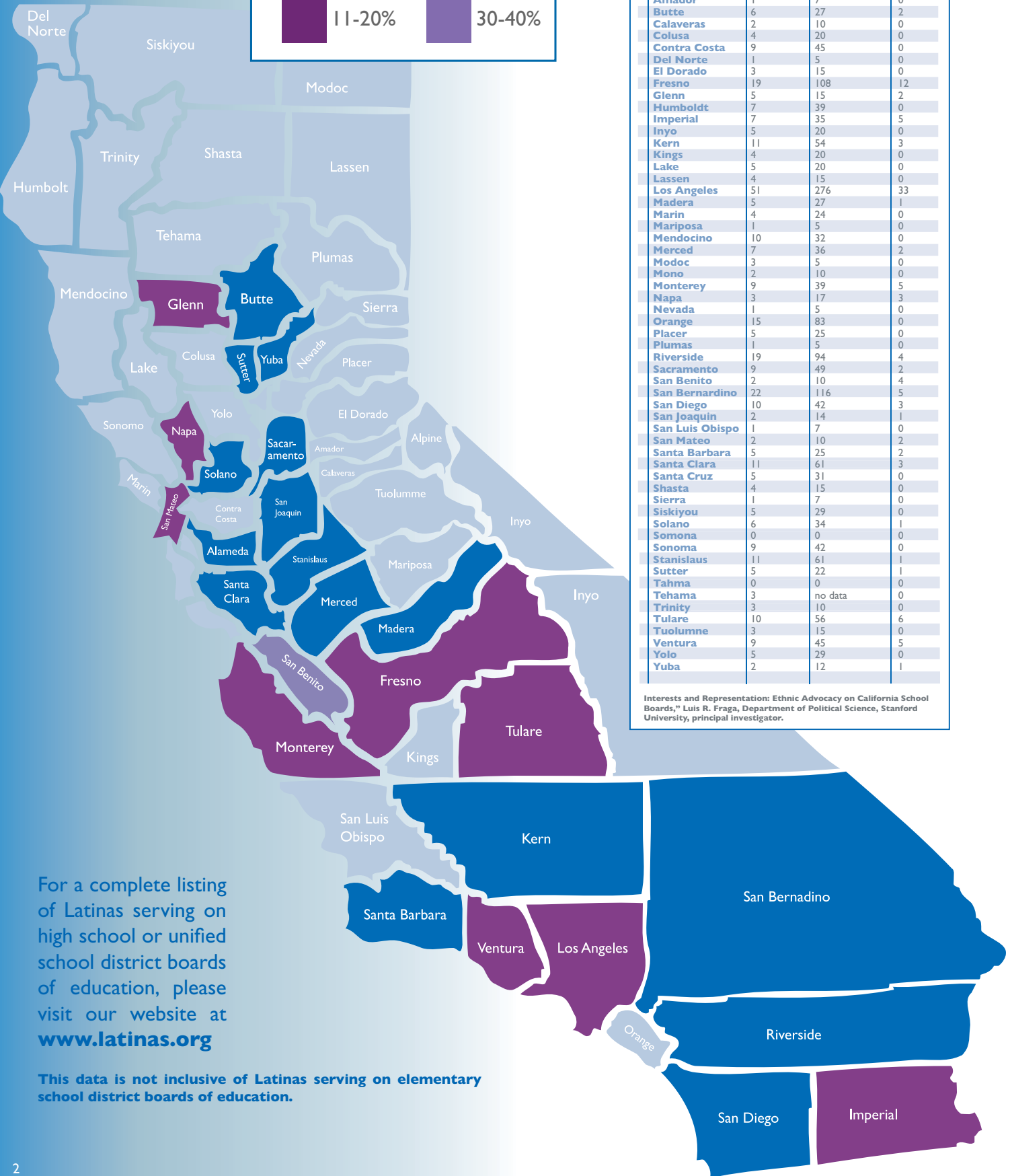
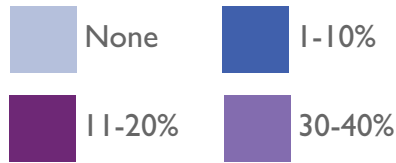
We took a deep breath of relief at the end of 2005 realizing that we indeed were witnessing Latinas participating in the leadership pipeline of HOPE and California. For instance, this report highlights the number of Latinas serving on high school and unified school district boards across the state. While our numbers are increasing, there are still vast opportunities for Latinas to serve on those boards that allocate resources and make tremendous decisions about the education our young people have access to. HOPE looks forward in 2006 to working with our Latina school board members to ensure California's schools are meeting the needs of all students.

The responsibility of Leadership is here and Latinas are qualified, poised, and ready to assume greater roles in our corporations, government, and communities.

Elmy Bermejo
Chair of the Board

Helen Iris Torres
Executive Director

Percent of Latinas serving on High School or Unified School District Boards of Education by County.



County	Total number of School Board Seats		
	Number of High School or Unified School Districts		Total number of Latinas in Board Seats
Alameda	17	82	4
Alpine	1	5	0
Amador	1	7	0
Butte	6	27	2
Calaveras	2	10	0
Colusa	4	20	0
Contra Costa	9	45	0
Del Norte	1	5	0
El Dorado	3	15	0
Fresno	19	108	12
Glenn	5	15	2
Humboldt	7	39	0
Imperial	7	35	5
Inyo	5	20	0
Kern	11	54	3
Kings	4	20	0
Lake	5	20	0
Lassen	4	15	0
Los Angeles	51	276	33
Madera	5	27	1
Marin	4	24	0
Mariposa	1	5	0
Mendocino	10	32	0
Merced	7	36	2
Modoc	3	5	0
Mono	2	10	0
Monterey	9	39	5
Napa	3	17	3
Nevada	1	5	0
Orange	15	83	0
Placer	5	25	0
Plumas	1	5	0
Riverside	19	94	4
Sacramento	9	49	2
San Benito	2	10	4
San Bernardino	22	116	5
San Diego	10	42	3
San Joaquin	2	14	1
San Luis Obispo	1	7	0
San Mateo	2	10	2
Santa Barbara	5	25	2
Santa Clara	11	61	3
Santa Cruz	5	31	0
Shasta	4	15	0
Sierra	1	7	0
Siskiyou	5	29	0
Solano	6	34	1
Sonoma	0	0	0
Sonoma	9	42	0
Stanislaus	11	61	1
Sutter	5	22	1
Tahama	0	0	0
Tehama	3	no data	0
Trinity	3	10	0
Tulare	10	56	6
Tuolumne	3	15	0
Ventura	9	45	5
Yolo	5	29	0
Yuba	2	12	1

Interests and Representation: Ethnic Advocacy on California School Boards," Luis R. Fraga, Department of Political Science, Stanford University, principal investigator.

For a complete listing of Latinas serving on high school or unified school district boards of education, please visit our website at www.latinas.org

This data is not inclusive of Latinas serving on elementary school district boards of education.

A key outcome of HOPE's work is to increase Latina graduation rates from college, thus ensuring upward economic and social mobility.

■ **Latinas are a visible demographic in California, and more specifically, in California's public schools where they represent nearly 23% (1.4 million) of total K-12 enrollment.¹**

Unfortunately, the large number of Latinas enrolled in California's K-12 educational system does not translate into more Latinas entering California's four year university systems.

■ **In 2004, Latinas represented 7% of total UC enrollment, and 13% of CSU enrollment. Low enrollment can be attributed in large part, to a lack of college preparedness. Of the 65,000 graduates from California's public high schools in 2004, only 24.7% had completed the necessary curriculum that would make them eligible to enter the CSU or UC system.²**

The result of Latinas not entering California's public university systems, translates into low educational attainment rates for Latinas as a whole.

■ **The 2000 Census revealed that in California, an abysmal 5% of Latinas 25 years and over held a Bachelor's degree. While Latinas attend California's Community Colleges at the highest rate, the 2000 Census revealed that only 4% of Latinas 25 years and over held Associates degrees, demonstrating that while Latinas are attending community college, they are not graduating and henceforth, not transferring into the university systems.**

HOPE believes that Latinas are entitled to a public education that affords them the opportunity to have real postsecondary choices and that means giving all students a choice to complete the A-G sequence of courses.

■ **Without completion of the A-G sequence of courses, Latinas are barred from the CSU and UC systems. Even if a Latina chooses not to go on to college, the A-G curriculum offers her a better academic platform to enter into the workforce. Recent research by the American Diploma Project found that employers increasingly want the same high level skills that college-bound students need. Employers cite the importance of strong reading and comprehension ability, strong writing and research skills, and they stress the need for Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, data analysis, and probability and statistics.³**

Latinas are working hard in California, comprising 40% of the female workforce in the state yet on average, they are only earning approximately \$12,000 annually.⁴

■ **If Latinas are not prepared to enter into institutions of higher education, California will have a large population of people unprepared for the demands of California's workforce needs, unable to meet their personal needs, and relying on government services for those basic needs. HOPE believes A-G is a solution in the right direction for Latinas and all Californians.**

¹ California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, California Public Schools, Enrollment by Gender, Grade, and Ethnic Designation, 2004-2005.

² California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, # of Grads and Grads with UC/CSU Required Courses, 2003-2004.

³ The Education Trust West. The A-G Curriculum: College Prep? Work-Prep? Life Prep. Understanding and Implementing a Rigorous Core Curriculum for All. Spring 2004.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Historical Income Tables - People, Regions - People of Hispanic Origin by median income and sex: 1974 to 2001 West.

HOPE is looking to partner with Latina School Board Members across California to bring A-G to our local school districts. HOPE is looking to the California Legislature to adopt a statewide policy to implement A-G across the state. This will be the crux of HOPE's policy agenda and political mobilization in 2006. If you are interested in finding out more about HOPE's work, please contact HOPE's Policy Director, Audrey E. Diaz, at adiaz@latinas.org.

THE A-G CURRICULUM

A History/Social Science:	2 years (1 year of World History, 1 year of U.S. History or half year of U.S. History and half year of Civics)
B English:	4 years
C Math:	3 years required, 4 years recommended (Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II required)
D Science:	2 years required, 3 years recommended (2 of the courses must be Biology, Chemistry or Physics)
E Foreign Language:	2 years (same language), 3 years recommended
F Visual / Performing Arts:	1 year
G College Prep Elective:	1 year

The HOPE Leadership Institute: A Political Training Ground

HLI Overview

The HOPE Leadership Institute (HLI) was launched in 1999. **HLI is a nine-month leadership training program** designed to train Latinas in vital advocacy skills, enabling them to create fundamental change within their local neighborhoods and to develop healthy communities across California.

The learning objectives for each participant in the HOPE Leadership Institute are:

- **To understand and engage in the dynamics of the local, state and national political process in general by using specific topics to implement the experiential learning process while advocating on behalf of HOPE.**
- **Acquire individual and group competencies to become active and effective advocates on issues impacting Latinas using education, healthcare, teen pregnancy prevention and economic development as the core issues at the local, state, and federal level.**
- **Analyze and implement strategies to affect the development of sound public policies.**

Throughout the nine-month HLI program (January – September), participants develop policy recommendations and share them with legislators and government officials, specifically in April during Latina Action Day, in Sacramento, and in September during Latina Action Day, in Washington, D.C.

Participants also develop and reflect on personal leadership goals, including how they will advance their civic participation efforts, career goals, and topic-specific policy recommendations.

GOALS

The Logic Model

At the conclusion of the evaluation, researchers at UCSF identified the “logic model” being employed by the **HOPE Leadership Institute**.

The purpose of sharing the HLI logic model is to provide HOPE’s stakeholders with a road map describing how the HLI curriculum connects the need for HLI to HLI’s desired results. Mapping the HLI program helps us visualize and understand how we are achieving the intended program goals and can lead to program improvements.

ACTIVITIES

The logic model, a simple image that reflects how and why our program works, is presented here.

ACTIVITIES

- Develop communication activities that promote self-confidence and self-efficacy to participate in the policy making environment.
- Train participants in the dynamics of the local, state and national political process.
- Promote an understanding of the importance of national, state, and community public/private partnerships and networks in the policy making process.
- Provide technical assistance and training to Latinas to assure organizational, leadership, and professional competency.

OUTCOMES

- Increased awareness, knowledge, and skills regarding the political process among Latina participants.
- Increased individual and group competencies and political/civic participation skills pertaining to issues impacting Latinas.
- Demonstrated capacity to analyze and implement strategies to affect the development of sound public policies impacting Latinas.
- Increased # of Latinas engaged in civic participation.
- Increased # of Latina women in a policy network working in partnerships at the national, state, and/or community levels to improve the health and well-being of Latinas.

GOALS

- Increase the number of Latinas successfully advocating for legislation and other policy changes supporting Latinos/as.
- Implement sound public policies impacting Latinas.
- Increase the number of Latinas in Leadership.

OUTCOMES

The Evaluation

Design & Methods

In early 2005, HOPE contracted with the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), Center for Reproductive Health Research and Policy, under the direction of Dr. Claire Brindis, Ph.D., to conduct a five year retrospective report on the HOPE Leadership Institute. UCSF utilized two primary data collection strategies: HLI follow-up internet-based survey and qualitative phone interviews with HLI alumnae.

Between January and April 2005, UCSF invited 205 HLI alumnae from the past six years (1999 – 2004) to participate in an online follow-up survey. More than half of those invited completed the survey. The online survey elicited information on the following topic areas:

- Leadership and advocacy skill development during HLI
- Application of these leadership and advocacy skills since HLI
- Confidence level in leadership and advocacy skills
- Feedback on how HOPE can best:
 - Provide continuing education to HLI alumnae to further increase their skill capacity, and
 - Activate the alumnae network to engage in further policy work
- Socio-economic background

Between February and March 2005, UCSF conducted qualitative telephone interviews with 25 HLI alumnae, representing each of the 6 years. The interviews elicited information on the following topic areas:

- Examples of experience and leadership success since participating in the HLI
- Examples of how participation in HLI has affected them personally and professionally
- Feedback on leadership and advocacy opportunities since participating in HLI
- Additional feedback on how HOPE can best partner with HLI alumnae

CELEBRATING 6 YEARS OF HLI SUCCESS

Results of the HLI Retrospective Study can be categorized into **five areas of impact:**

- Personal impact
 - Professional impact
- Impact on leadership
 - Civic participation or political impact
- Impact on collaboration

Highlights of the findings are as follows:

PERSONAL

■ Increased confidence in pursuing goals

36% of HLI alumnae reported increasing their confidence in pursuing their personal, professional, and political aspirations

■ Expanded network of support and influence

32% of HLI alumnae reported that HLI helped them expand their personal and professional network of support

PROFESSIONAL

■ Increased Confidence

44% of HLI alumnae reported increasing their confidence in pursuing their professional goals

■ Expanded network of support and influence

40% of HLI alumnae noted the expansion of their network of support

LEADERSHIP

■ Increased Confidence

■ 78% of HLI alumnae reported their confidence in presentation and public speaking skills strongly increased or increased

■ 74% of HLI alumnae reported their confidence in taking leadership roles strongly increased or increased

■ Increased Leadership Goals

■ 15% of HLI alumnae considered public office **prior** to HLI. 28% of HLI alumnae considered public office **after** HLI.

■ 16% of HLI alumnae applied for board or commission appointments **prior** to HLI. 38% of HLI alumnae applied for board or commission appointments **after** HLI.



HLI ALUMNAE

who have ran for, served, or are currently holding elected office since 1999.

- N** Northern- 3
- BA** Bay Area- 3
- CV** Central Valley- 12
- CC** Central Coast- 1
- IE** Inland Empire- 1
- GLA** Greater Los Angeles- 12
- OC** Orange County- 1
- SD** San Diego- 1

Total Number of Alumnae: 34



CIVIC IMPACT/POLITICAL IMPACT

Supporting a Political Campaign

Local Level

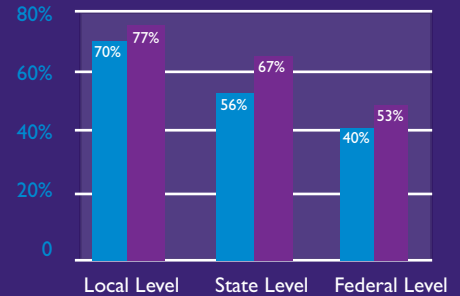
- before HLI: 70% (n=87)
- after HLI: 77% (n=96)

State Level

- before HLI: 56% (n=69)
- after HLI: 67% (n=83)

Federal Level

- before HLI: 40% (n=49)
- after HLI: 53% (n=65)



HOPE does not endorse nor contribute to candidates for political office. This graph is a reflection of independent activities by the individuals interviewed.

CIVIC IMPACT/POLITICAL IMPACT

- 79% of HLI alumnae reported their ability to prepare and strategize for legislative meetings strongly increased or increased
- 86% of HLI alumnae reported their ability to understand the political process at all levels (local, state, federal) strongly increased or increased
- The percent of HLI alumnae that reported conducting outreach to a policymaker about a policy issue increased 23%, from 54% before to 77% after HLI participation.
- Over 1/3 of HLI alumnae cited their successful election to public office as attributable to HLI

COLLABORATION

98% of HLI alumnae reported having contact with at least one HLI alumnae following their graduation from HLI. The most common forms of collaboration were:

- Ongoing information/resource sharing
- Inspiring empowering each other to work for their community
- Publicizing each others events/activities
- Providing/receiving campaign fundraising assistance

90% of HLI alumnae reported that they supported a fellow HLI colleague's run for public office. The most common form of support was:

- Making a financial contribution (81%)
- Giving a personal endorsement (32%)
- Walking precincts (30%)
- Phone banking (22%)
- Providing campaign guidance and strategies (19%)

LATINA LEADERSHIP

Making a difference in the Los Angeles Unified School District

In 2005, the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education approved a bold reform plan that requires high school students to complete the A-G curriculum as a requirement for graduation. The A-G curriculum is a sequence of 15 required high school courses that a student must complete in order to study at a four year public college in California. In 2004, only 24% of Latina public high school graduates had completed the A-G curriculum, leaving 76% ineligible for UC or CSU admission.

The following are the stories of key Latinas who made the movement possible and continue to be involved in the implementation phase of this bold reform.



Veronica Melvin, Alliance for a Better Community
The Advocate

Q Tell us about Alliance for a Better Community

A ABC is a Latino policy and advocacy organization that was established more than 5 years ago. ABC works on issues of education, health, housing, economic development, and public safety with most of our activity in education. ABC got started with the Belmont Learning Center, advocating for the school's completion that is set to be completed in 2009. ABC's primary role was to organize parents and the community to ensure that local elected officials realized the value of the school to parents and students. ABC has also taken an active role in the school construction bonds making sure funds get to areas in most need. Finally, we have been very active in the community push for A-G.

Q Why is A-G important to ABC?

A A-G is important to a lot of people including ABC. A-G had previously been worked on at the state level and ABC had supported those efforts. Locally, ABC engaged in A-G with the development of the Latino Scorecard in 2003. Partners included: United Way of Los Angeles, the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI), the

UCLA Center for the Study of Health and Culture, the Loyola Marymount Center for the Study of Los Angeles, Cal State Northridge Center for the Study of Southern California, and Pepperdine University. This partnership was charged with identifying issues affecting the Latino community to build an agenda around them to move action forward. TRPI did the education work and identified areas in high school education that are critical to Latino success: High school completion – The dropout rate was higher than 50-60% in certain schools; A-G completion – Indicating how many youth are prepared to go on to college. ABC found that an abysmal 15% of Latino youth in the Los Angeles Unified School District were being prepared for college. Armed with that statistic, we decided to focus on LAUSD because it is the largest provider of secondary education to Latino youth in the nation.

Q What was critical to the community movement?

A It was critical to have a base of diverse community organizations. We were fortunate to have community groups on board who represented different issue areas such as housing, economic justice, and civil rights. Then we had groups representing different regions such as Pico Union, San Fernando Valley, East Los Angeles, South Los Angeles, and San Pedro. All of these groups had a similar interest in making certain their students and their communities at

least had access to the classes that would prepare them to go on to college, it didn't mean they had to go to college but at least they were prepared to go to college if they chose to pursue it. We also had to have information that could inform the movement. ABC linked up with UCLA and Dr. Julie Mendoza at UC ACCORD. ABC as part of Communities for Educational Equity (what our coalition came to be called) drafted a policy memo giving back-ground on A-G and the lack of college preparation in Los Angeles. The memo articulated with data how different schools and communities were being affected. It was also critical for ABC to connect with other Latinas. Women like Maria Casillas at Families in Schools who is a legitimate advocate and expert in education, coming from an education background as a former area superintendent. Maria was invaluable in that in her resides the history of high school reform in Los Angeles. What cannot be understated is the role that the office of former LAUSD School Board President Jose Huizar played in the A-G movement. We would not have been successful without one receptive body in leadership at LAUSD to work with us, feed us information, encourage us, and champion the issue for us in the school district. That's where another Latina came into play – Monica Garcia, Huizar's Chief of Staff that sat down with ABC initially and said, "Yes, this is a critical issue. "Monica worked with President Jose Huizar to ensure that this was a top issue.

Q What were your successes?

A We were able to establish a formal community coalition of more than 20 organizations which began in June of 2004 and has been active since its inception. We have a great leadership team consisting of members of the African American community, Latino community, the United Way and others. There are several committees of the coalition that engage organizations in the activities (media, community organizing, policy and research) that are of interest to them. We have been able to hold three press events with several elected officials representing city councils, school boards, State legislature, Congress, State Superintendent, and business. We have had two community mobilizations where we first brought together 500 then 800 people to LAUSD for community advocacy and college fairs. These provided opportunities for students to demand A-G, demand more rigor and it was an opportunity for us to provide more information on A-G and going on to college. Our success has been establishing a foundation across Los Angeles that promotes activism in communities not traditionally active in the education of their children.

Q What were your challenges?

A Our biggest challenge was overcoming people saying our kids didn't need A-G or that they would fail in A-G. We kept hearing that not all kids are meant to go to college, that there is not enough room in college for them so why were we giving a false expectation of going to college by implementing a college preparatory curriculum. That was a slap in the face to our community. Essentially what they were saying was that because there isn't room, because our students and their families have limited experience in higher education to encourage college-going, because of inequities within the public education system that we should continue to allow a broken system of low expectations to track students from the earliest grades so that some go to college and most don't. What we kept saying was, "Let kids choose their own futures, let them have the preparation to either go to college, vocational training, enter into the workforce, or whatever it is they want to do after high school but they should be prepared to succeed when they make the choice. Without A-G, their choices are limited, and unfortunately, the option that is excluded is the option that generally provides access to better jobs and quality of life." We had to reiterate that over and over throughout the campaign.

Q What are your next steps?

A We are working on the implementation of A-G at LAUSD. In the upcoming school year, anyone asking for A-G must receive it. In 2008 all incoming freshman will receive A-G as a default curriculum and for entering 2012 9th graders, A-G will be a graduation requirement. We are working to ensure LAUSD meets those goals, making sure classes are accessible and that students are successful in them. CEE formally participates in two district committees, the secondary division chief's A-G implementation committee and a committee of the school board on the high school exit exam, drop outs, and A-G. In addition, CEE decided to work directly with 6 regions, based on family feeder schools, to be active in the implementation of A-G. We chose 6 schools where community groups were already present. ABC is present at Belmont High School and coordinates a Belmont Education Collaborative focused on A-G, drop out, high school achievement, and parent education & engagement. The collaborative will provide an array of services including mentoring, tutoring, parent awareness, student leadership, college going culture, and college support systems to make certain that that school has everything it needs in preparing students for A-G. In addition, we just launched the Valley Education Collaborative in partnership with Senator Richard Alarcon's office, he has been our statewide champion of A-G. In the Valley, we will work with Sylmar and Polytechnic High Schools to support their successful implementation of A-G. There are other collaboratives coming together at Roosevelt, Garfield, and two south Los Angeles schools.

Q Is A-G uniquely important to Latinas?

A Los Angeles' future prosperity hinges on the education of its largest population, young Latinos. In terms of Latina progress, our girls are doing a better job of completing A-G and going to and completing college, a reverse of earlier trends when males outpaced females in educational attainment. I would say it is especially important for Latinas to complete A-G because we cannot continue to have our young Latinas relying on someone else to have the education for them and to be providers for their families. When a Latina completes A-G and graduates from high school, she is going to have a better prospect of earning a good salary and providing for her family, especially if she goes on to higher education. She will not be dependent on someone else to provide for her. In addition, we need to make certain that more Latinas are prepared to fill our shoes as we get old and rusty—there are many more issues that need community advocacy.

Let kids choose their own futures,
let them have the preparation to either go to college, vocational training, enter into the
workforce, or whatever it is they want to do after high school but they should be prepared
to succeed when they make the choice.



Monica Garcia,
Former Chief of Staff,
Former LAUSD Board
President Jose Huizar

THE PUBLIC OFFICE

Q Tell us about your former position at the Los Angeles Unified School District

A I was the Chief of Staff to School Board President Jose Huizar since 2001. My role was to represent and advise the instructional policy arm of our office. I worked on President Huizar's top issues: School construction, drop out, quality teachers, apprenticeships, community involvement, and high school reform leading to an increase in access to college. I have had the pleasure of serving the residents of LAUSD's District 2 which serves Boyle Heights, Downtown, China Town, Elysian Heights, Lincoln Heights, and portions of Mid-Wilshire. In 2004, our work in high school reform led us to Communities for Educational Excellence (CEE) where together, we identified A-G as a top issue. The issue fell under my jurisdiction because of its relation to curriculum and instruction.

Q How did your office come to support A-G?

A For eight years of my life, I have been involved in preparing young people for college through both formal and informal channels. I came to LAUSD as a former social worker and counselor. I was quick to support the idea of A-G. When President Huizar identified increasing graduation rates and reducing drop outs as his high school priority area, I knew A-G was in line with that. I met with A-G allies on a regular basis, a group who worked on the Latino Scorecard. We had previously worked with this group on school construction projects. These were community stakeholders who had a relationship with our office.

Q How did you bring A-G to the LAUSD?

A One of the roles of a board member is to provide communities access to the district and to be a voice for community stakeholders. The organization, meaning the school district, doesn't change on its own.

In order for our office to maximize the community mobilization around A-G, we had to talk to all board members. We had to do a lot of homework in terms of finding out what reform efforts were in the pipeline and assessing the status of students' access to classes.

Education is a civil rights issue and creating access is part of the work we had to do.

We brought in voices from the outside such as Ed Trust West and the Superintendent of San Jose Unified School District. Having an LAUSD Board member part of the collaborative was key and helped to raise the profile of the movement. I personally was a member of the policy group and steering committee. Based on the data we were collecting, we decided that we had to phase in A-G. Phasing it in made it more acceptable to a larger group of people. We were asking the community to have faith in an institution where little faith existed.

In the official resolution President Huizar introduced in the district, we called for the creation of a planning process that called for community voices and unions. We kept coming up against the question of effects on career and vocational education. We had to spend a lot of time negotiating that reality and it took real innovation. We had to get the career and vocational education community to work with us to improve the system. We asked them, "Are you satisfied with what is being given to students now?"

Q What were the biggest challenges to this campaign?

A People were making assumptions about our success based on the current academic performance of our students. Many people felt that the idea of A-G would cause more students to dropout. That's why it was so important for us to ensure that learning supports were included in the program – starting with an assessment of 5th graders. We had to take a hard look at what needed to happen from the district side for this effort to be successful. We needed to identify appropriate interventions so that students could have the academic wherewithal to be successful. Another big challenge was and continues to be money! As a district, we spend a lot of money already. This Resolution didn't budget any additional spending but rather, called for a realignment of resources and we had to ask the District to do that. There were questions of timing. We were

facing a budget shortfall, we were in the middle of a labor negotiation, we were facing a shortage of math and foreign language teachers, and the list went on. We had to keep in mind that the Board's role is to set out policy for the district and we knew, meaning the Board President and CEE, that the A-G resolution was a means to changing the entire system and that couldn't be put off. The low number of students completing A-G is a real tragedy and to me that translates into a gap in service by our schools. We were seeing success for some at the expense of others. We could not keep promoting initiatives that work for some students, we needed to have policy that was district wide.

We had questions about the possibility of having students opt out of A-G and we had to tackle whether or not we wanted to make A-G a requirement. Opting out became a negotiating point and there was a lot of discussion about how and when a student could opt out. Eventually we came to agreement that a student could opt into a career structured alternative program but not until after that student has talked with a counselor and their parent is present for that meeting.

Q What was the biggest surprise by-product of your work?

A I was surprised by how strong our coalition was and still is. People are uncomfortable talking about race and class so we weren't sure how much we could push. The fact that we got the requirement adopted is a testament to the great advocates in Los Angeles. Education is a civil rights issue and creating access is part of the work we had to do.

Q What needs to happen at LAUSD for our students to be successful?

A We need to see our graduation numbers go up. We need to see more than 50% of students engaged in learning.

We need for students to feel connected to their learning experience. We need an environment where opportunity and possibility is the vibe and not penalty and deficit. We need new attitudes of success and accomplishment.

We need to have a belief that the school is alive and a part of the community. We need the community in turn to have expectations of high outcomes. We need the community to continue to exercise their political and philosophical power and to truly realize that they can take ownership of their schools.

Q How can other communities bring A-G to their districts?

A First, you have to build a broad coalition of stakeholders across geographic, ethnic, and political lines. You cannot overlook the time and investment you must make in building relationships. Second, you have to learn from existing knowledge. The San Jose Unified School District provided us with a lot of information to help us strategize. Third, you have to pace yourself. Know that this is going to be a long road and that there is no quick fix in education. Education is probably one of the most complex issues facing communities throughout our nation. The kind of systemic change we need is longer than most elected office terms. The challenge in urban America is poverty and access.

Twenty-five years from now I don't want to see the same dropout numbers, college enrollment numbers that we see today. We cannot afford to lose the momentum that has been born here in Los Angeles. Our state and country needs us, as Latinas, to put forward our best thinking and most creative resources to get the important work of education reform done. Latinas have a keen sense of community that we can all benefit from and that's a win-win.



Maria Casillas,
Families in Schools
The Organizer

Q Tell us about your organization

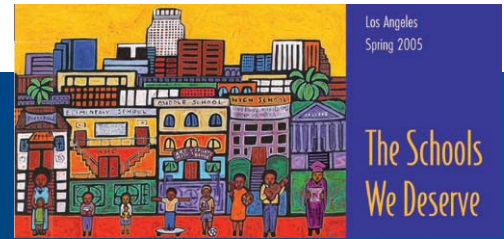
A Families In Schools was created in 2001 to continue the work of the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP) – a school reform project that supported improvement efforts in school districts. We aim to make schools more user-friendly to parents (and community in general) by increasing the school's capacity to effectively engage and outreach to parents. We have a program called, "Read with Me, Lea Conmigo," a family literacy program for pre-K, kindergarten, and 1st grade students that teaches parents how to read to their children in the home. Families read between 120-140 books over the year. Through this program, we have served 99,000 families across the Los Angeles Unified (Pico Union, San Fernando, and East Los Angeles) and Pomona, Long Beach, Montebello Unified School Districts.

How did Families in Schools get involved with A-G?

A One of our programs (Going On To College) targets 5th graders and their parents, to build college knowledge and to help them become college bound by junior high school. Through this program we found that most Latino and African American parents have no clue as to what the A-G curriculum is. We were shocked at the lack of knowledge and awareness. Through our work with high schools, we had also learned that it was difficult for our kids to access A-G courses in their schools.

I sit on the Board of Alliance for a Better Community (ABC) where A-G completion is of primary concern. We were happy to contribute to the knowledge around these issues as we had several years of experience working to support small learning communities, which we believe will improve secondary education. Our research indicated that at Roosevelt high school in 2002 only 12% of graduating seniors had completed the A-G sequence of coursework. At Belmont high school, only 4% of graduates had completed A-G. However, at

We must be able to speak about education so that it captures the imagination of the public to get them on board.



North Hollywood high school nearly 20% of graduating seniors had completed A-G most likely because more of those students come from middle class families, and the school had various strategies in place to make students college ready.

What seemed to be lacking in some of our communities was access to knowledge about A-G; there was no policy in place prohibiting a student from enrolling in A-G courses. Most students however, got into those courses because they were guided by counselors or teachers who took an interest. Parents want their children to go to college, and students want to go to college, but neither schools nor parents were keeping track to make sure students were enrolled in A-G classes. That really alarmed us.

In another example, during LAAMP's partnership with the Weingart Foundation, the researchers asked teachers of 3rd grade students if their students were on the road to college. Those teachers responded that if their students were not reading by the age of 9, they were not going to make it to college. Teachers reported that 78% of their students were not college bound and were far behind. In turn, parents of 3rd graders reported that they thought their children were on the road to college. Approximately 80% of parents said their kids were college bound, primarily because teachers communicated that message; some parents indicated their children were praised for being well-behaved and automatically concluded they were doing fine in school. Low-income Latinos with low levels of education attainment don't really know how to work the system for their kids; they learn things are not going well until it's too late to take action.

Q What was FIS's role in bringing A-G to the LAUSD?

A First of all, this was a very well organized campaign by the facilitators, including ABC and the Community Coalition. They kept a good pulse on the community. I think my contributions came as a result of my many "network connections." I was able to place phone calls to "friends" in influential positions to let them know about what the coalition was embarking on and that we

might need their support in the future. I asked them, "Do you think all kids should be prepared for college while in high school?" Everyone agreed that if not college, or a high tech career course, they would be doomed to poverty. They were surprised to learn not all students had access to the courses and assumed that they enrolled and probably flunked out.

This issue is a key part of my own personal mission. I believe the purpose of public education is to prepare students for successful entry into college. I remember speaking at a press conference where I stated that we should give the Los Angeles Unified School District School Board an F if they didn't support A-G for all students.

A-G is a leveraging kind of issue, focused on outcomes at the end of high school. For A-G to work, interventions and learning supports need to be in place all through the levels, from K through 12. We must speak about education so that the public can understand the concept that the 21st century requires college for all. For the business community, we must talk investments. Investments in public education will benefit our economy, make us more competitive globally.

"The Schools We Deserve" was a beautiful campaign that included a diverse group of organizations from across Los Angeles. FIS took the lead role in producing the policy report and the corresponding pamphlets for parent workshops. We focused on the need to make schools smaller and to provide a college going curriculum to all students. We worked with other groups to train parents and conducted many workshops for parents whose children attend or will attend Roosevelt High School and Belmont High School.

Q What were your challenges?

A There is a deeply ingrained belief that not all kids should go to college. People told us that some kids have no interest in attending college and should have the right to do something else; others indicated not everyone can afford college. Some people said the campaign was penalizing students by saying everyone has to go to college or they're no good. While we respected everyone's opinion, we countered that students should

be prepared, and if they decided they wanted to opt out, it would be by choice, not because they weren't prepared. The vocational education constituency was concerned about making college the sole option/strategy, especially for students who might want to pursue a course of study that meets the highest career and technical education standards identified by the state of California. By doing so, we shifted the focus of vocational education to more academic high tech skills. Representatives from industries that depend on high tech skills testified that they need students to be better prepared in Math; students need Algebra 1 and 2, and Geometry.

There are now challenges with the implementation of the resolution. This is not just about high school reform and our coalition recognized that it is about setting everyone (from pre-school through high school) focused toward the same target. If implemented well, it's ensuring a very competitive, rigorous K-12 system, where the culture of literacy and achievement, both at home and at school, support students in reaching high academic goals.

Q How do you go about a community movement?

A This reform involved grassroots organizations, which are more authentically anchored in communities and have the necessary relationships necessary for successful collaboration.

Successful movements such as this coalition have had key players on board and they took the time to find out what information these players needed to be supportive of our interests. The coalition was multicultural and diverse in perspective. These are important aspects of successful Los Angeles partnerships that must be in place before any resolution can be written because the participants need to write it themselves. To be successful in LA you need to bring together community organizations, youth organizations, school reformers, foundations... and all their styles need to be "managed" to ensure each organization can contribute. In addition, the campaign needs someone that can create visuals and other tools.

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2005 marked the inaugural year of the HLI Challenge, a bold fundraising campaign that encourages HOPE Leadership Institute Alumnae to make a financial investment in HOPE. Contributions that come through the HLI Challenge go toward HLI Continuing Education, the creation of an alumnae e-Newsletter, and the creation of an online community. **HOPE is proud to report that the HLI alumnae exceeded the target goal of raising \$10,000. A heartfelt thank you goes out to each and every alumnae who donated to HOPE.**

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The next HLI challenge campaign will be launched in June 2006. For more information please contact Angela Acosta-Salazar, HOPE Leadership Institute Director, AT.HLI@Latinas.org



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