

Improving Education for Children of Immigrants: Opportunities, Challenges, and Next Steps



Southwest Regional Meeting of the National Immigrant & ELL Education Advocacy Project

Dear Colleague:

Please join us on Thursday, December 15, 2005 in Phoenix, Arizona for a full-day roundtable discussion and strategy session on issues affecting immigrant, refugee and English language learner (ELL) students in the Southwestern United States and strategies that can be employed by those in the public, private and non-profit sectors to help improve these students' educational outcomes.

The meeting is the second in a series of regional and national meetings being hosted by the National Immigrant and ELL Education Advocacy Project, which is convening a series of discussions and strategy sessions for immigrant community leaders, education policy groups, researchers, and funders from the immigrant rights and education reform worlds, aiming to promote new partnerships and projects to address the problems that immigrant and ELL students face.

As the number of immigrant and ELL students continues to grow across the country, the challenge of reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates grows. We believe it is imperative to unite education and immigrant advocacy groups to learn from each other and build a movement that applies sufficient pressure to ensure that federal, state and local education departments meet the needs of these at-risk students. Our goals are to better understand the impact of current education reform measures on immigrant students and ELLs, and to expand the network and effectiveness of organizations - including philanthropic organizations - that are working to improve educational outcomes for immigrant and ELL students.

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI), the Urban Institute (UI), Public Interest Projects (PIP), and the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), with support from the Kellogg Foundation, are coordinating this national effort. Our lead partner for this convening on

issues affecting immigrant and ELL students in the Southwest is Children's Action Alliance in Arizona. We are grateful that they have agreed to serve as the host for this very important meeting and to share their time and considerable expertise on these issues.

The December 15th roundtable will include: demographic and policy presentations on immigrant and ELL students; panel discussions featuring regional advocates, researchers and government representatives on the challenges and needs of immigrant and ELL students; and discussions focused on specific actions that various stakeholders can or must be convinced to take in order to improve outcomes for immigrant and ELL students. The list of distinguished presenters and panelists includes Michael Fix of the Migration Policy Institute, Margaret Garcia Dugan of the Arizona Department of Education, Margie McHugh of the New York Immigration Coalition, and Delia Pampa of the National Council of La Raza.

Many of us have become increasingly concerned about the well-being of immigrant and ELL students and the need for strengthened advocacy across the country. In Arizona, as is the case in many states, there is a special need to develop a broad-based advocacy agenda and build alliances among education, social welfare, and immigrant rights groups. This roundtable will provide a unique opportunity to share ideas and lessons learned on ways to improve student outcomes and increase the capacity and effectiveness of local advocates concerned with these issues.

The meeting on Thursday, December 15th will run from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Flinn Foundation at 1802 North Central Avenue in Phoenix. You are also invited to a reception on that Wednesday evening from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at the Wells Fargo Museum at 100 Washington Street in Phoenix. Thanks to the generous support of the Kellogg Foundation, all meals (including the reception on the evening of December 14th) will be provided. In addition, limited travel scholarships are available.

Please **RSVP by Wednesday, November 17th** by contacting either Kim Van Pelt, Director of Health Policy for Children's Action Alliance, at (602) 266-0707 x211 or kvanpelt@azchildren.org or José Davila, Director of Education Advocacy for the NYIC, at (212) 627-2227 x241 or jdavila@thenyic.org. In addition, if you know of other groups who would benefit or be interested in participating, please contact Kim or Jose as soon as possible.

Our best,

Michael Fix
Migration Policy Institute

Carol Kamin
Children's Action Alliance

Michele Lord
Public Interest Projects

Margie McHugh
New York Immigration Coalition