



## The State of Public Education for Latino Students: Advocacy Workshop Plan and Materials

### I. Notes for Presenter:

This workshop is designed to lead young people (approximately 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades) through a discussion based on “**The State of Public Education for Latino Students,**” an UnidosUS report on the challenges and opportunities facing Latinos in public education today. The workshop aims to engage students around discussions of their own public school experiences, and to teach them how to become better advocates in the education space. The workshop is designed for 20-50 students and works well with a mix of schools and grades. It should take approximately two hours but can be modified or split into multiple sessions as needed. The workshop agenda described below allows for a 10-minute break to be inserted where appropriate for your group (we recommend a break between Exercise #2 and Exercise #3, with snacks).

To prepare for this workshop, read the report, workshop plan and powerpoint presentation and prepare accompanying materials. Print out individual quotes in large, bold font/letters, one quote per page, for Exercise #2). Print out issue area breakout discussion guides for each of the four breakout sessions (each student will need one discussion guide for Exercise #3). The quotes and four discussion guides are attached below. Test the presentation and videos.

You will want to appoint a main presenter/moderator, facilitators (4) for the breakout sessions (e.g. adults or college students), and volunteers to help with logistics such as set up, food, etc.

On the day of the discussion, hang large mural paper (preferably two different shades) to walls, one labeled “POSITIVE”, the other “NEGATIVE” (for Exercise #1). Also hang the individual quotes around the room with tape or place them on tables that students can walk around to view. Students will be working in groups, so a table setup (with 4-5 students per table) is ideal. Place paper, markers, and stickers at each table.

**II. Materials:**

Green/Red stickers dots and post-it notes

Mural paper and chart paper

Markers

Projector/screen for presentation and video

Printed copies of:

- Printed quotes for wall
- Copies of breakout group discussion guides (enough for each student in the four breakout sessions)
- A few copies of the report for reference (optional)



### III. Workshop Guide

**SLIDE 1: Welcome students to the discussion and lead introductions. (5 minutes)**

**SLIDE 2-6: UnidosUS: Who We Are (10 minutes)**

This is an introduction to the work of UnidosUS (who we are, where we work, what we do), and more broadly to the world of Latino civil rights and advocacy. Discuss UnidosUS programs.

Show Video: 50 Years of Impact, 2018 Year in Review

If appropriate, discuss your own organization or school fits into the bigger mission.

**SLIDE 7: What is Advocacy? (5 minutes)**

Here you can discuss the basics of advocacy. Ask students if they can give examples of advocacy. Advocacy is:

- the act of speaking on the behalf of or in support of another person or group, cause, place, or thing.
- a tool for “putting a problem on the agenda, providing a solution to that problem and building support for acting on both the problem and the solution”. <https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/publishing/advocacy-course/what-is-advocacy>
- advocacy is about social change; it is about influencing public policy and also public opinion.

Past advocacy efforts in the area of public education have led, for example, to:

- School Desegregation
- Mandatory School Lunch Programs
- Programs and Standards for English Learners

### **SLIDE 8: Exercise #1: Envisioning Change (20 minutes)**

To be good advocates, or agents of change, we need to have a vision of what we would like to see, and how that ideal compares with what currently exists. Today we are here to think about the kind of change we want in our schools for youth just like you.

Activity: Mural of Education Dreams and Challenges

One wall #1 (POSITIVE), use the materials to illustrate or put in words (picture, poem, etc.) what the ideal school would look like, or what has made your school experience positive.

On wall #2 (NEGATIVE), use the materials to illustrate or put in words the challenges or main things you would change to make your ideal school a reality.

### **SLIDE 9-12: Short discussion of the report (5 minutes)**

Ask students to think about using a phone to navigate. What happens if the GPS or location are turned off? To figure out where we're going, we have to know where we are. The report we're releasing today shows a snapshot of where we are, of how Latino youth are doing across the country.

Briefly discuss the report and show students where they can find it.

### **SLIDE 13: Exercise #2: Red Light, Green Light (20 minutes)**

We know you are the experts on this, as students in school now. We want to see if this report shows an accurate picture and find out what else we need to know. There are four main areas we're going to talk about today, but first we want to see if some of these things we heard in the focus groups are true in your experience.

There are quotes from our focus groups posted around the room.

- Put a GREEN sticker next to things that are true for your school or community
- Put a RED sticker next to things that are NOT true for your school or community
- You don't have to put a sticker on every statement
- You can use a post-it note to add questions or comments

### **SLIDES 14-15: Exercise #3: Issue-Area Breakout Sessions (35 minutes)**

Place students into four groups for each issue area (they can choose randomly through a room count). Each of the four groups should have chart paper and markers. Every student in the group should have a copy of the discussion guide for their issue area (see below). Tell the students to reflect on the quotes they've read, and to focus on the particular subject of their

breakout session. An adult or designated facilitator (such as college student) should help each group stay on track.

Follow the instructions on the Discussion Guide, and write notes on chart paper:

- What problem or issue is most important for this area in your own community?
- What are some things you could do to make a difference?
- What do adults need to know about this? Which adults would you talk to?

Explain what an “elevator speech” is and tell each group to come up with an elevator speech that summarizes the issues they’ve identified. Tell the students they should think (as advocates do) about who their audience might be (teachers, school administrators, legislative staff, etc.).

### **REPORT BACK AND CONCLUDE (10 minutes)**

Each group will present a 1-2 minute elevator speech to share their ideas about this issue. One person will present, but the entire group will help them prepare.

They can further present some of the potential actions, solutions and/or audiences that they identified during their discussion that might help make a difference.



**IV. Four Issue Area Breakout Discussion Guides (Print on one sheet and distribute enough for each group)**

## Group 1: Limited Funding and Resources

We spoke with 80 Latino students across the country (Orlando, FL; Las Vegas, NV; Nashville, TN; and Pontiac, MI) to better understand their public high school experience. Most of the students told us they had high aspirations for their post-high school life, whether they planned to attend college or work (or, often, do both). They also told us that although their parents couldn't always be engaged in their education—because of things like work hours, language barriers, or their own limited education—they were very supportive of their children's education. Despite this positive outlook, many of the students told us about the challenges they had encountered in their public school experience, which they felt limited their access to a quality education experience.

Looking at the dots and thinking about your own experience, decide as a group:

- What problem or issue is most important for this area in your own community?
- What could make a difference?
- What do adults need to know about this?

### QUOTES:

**The lack of funding in many public schools attended by Latino students creates problems that affect their overall school experience, for example:**

*"There are too many students to one class size. I feel that if teachers would get better pay, there would be more qualified teachers."* —Spanish-speaking parent, Las Vegas

*"I am privileged enough to go to one of the schools that they do have all the textbooks and we do have computers and we have everything that you really need. But I know that problems exist in other schools and I think it is unfair."* —English-speaking student, Las Vegas

*"Can I start off by saying the food? They serve pizza every day and it is Papa Johns and usually it is like cold or nasty. Or if they give you nuggets, they give three little pieces."* —English-speaking student, Las Vegas

**For many Latino students, limited funding translates into little support or quality advising for college preparation, including access to advanced coursework, AP credit, college application processes, or financial aid/scholarship information. Students often learn about requirements and scholarships when it's already too late.**

*"Sometimes it's hard to get scholarships because you are like not qualified enough for it, or academically don't have what those requirements are, and sometimes it's not even your fault, it's just you weren't prepared for those things. Or you don't have the proper resources to get to the scholarships."* —Spanish-speaking student, Nashville

*"For example, the ACT; I know that at my school they never really talked about it, and even from elementary school all the way up to high school, up until my last year, which is this year, no one's even really mentioned it or tried to prepare us for it."* —English-speaking student, Nashville

## Group 2: Relationships with Teachers, Counselors and Other School Staff

We spoke with 80 Latino students across the country (Orlando, FL; Las Vegas, NV; Nashville, TN; and Pontiac, MI) to better understand their public high school experience. Most of the students told us they had high aspirations for their post-high school life, whether they planned to attend college or work (or, often, do both). They also told us that although their parents couldn't always be engaged in their education—because of things like work hours, language barriers, or their own limited education—they were very supportive of their children's education. Despite this positive outlook, many of the students told us about the challenges they had encountered in their public school experience, which they felt limited their access to a quality education experience.

Looking at the dots and thinking about your own experience, decide as a group:

- What problem or issue is most important for this area in your own community?
- What could make a difference?
- What do adults need to know about this?

### QUOTES:

**Some students complained about the quality of teaching at their school. Others said that they do not blame teachers, since teachers themselves are limited by issues such as large classrooms, assigned curricula, the emphasis on testing, and low salaries. Others described how a good relationship with a teacher or administrator helped them navigate a path toward success, even amid obstacles like these.**

*"They should hire better teachers. Some in my school, I don't learn the stuff they teach because of the way they teach. They are just putting stuff on board and giving out a work sheet."* — English-speaking student, Pontiac, Mich.

*"There is a lack of time for teachers because of the volume of students. The school requires testing for the kids and makes them turn in reports, and that takes away time from the teachers. The teachers have that pressure, and if the students do not have the test scores where they should be, the teachers will be fired. And so, that stresses out the teachers."*

—Spanish-speaking parent, Las Vegas.

*"My most important experience - and I think it was really life-changing for me - was one of my teachers. I was just getting picked on for stupid reasons, but she told me that I was not going to be defined by the mistakes of other people."* —English-speaking student, Orlando

**Counselors, like teachers, were often portrayed as having little time for students and being of little help for both academic and non-academic issues; even helpful counselors were overextended by the school system:**

*"My daughter wanted to talk to the counselor and she says that the counselor cannot see me because she does not have time."* —Spanish-speaking parent, Las Vegas

*"I didn't know anything about AP classes...If you don't have a specific question to ask them, they are not going to offer you any kind of information on their own."* —Spanish-speaking student, Orlando

### Group 3: School Climate and Inclusiveness

We spoke with 80 Latino students across the country (Orlando, FL; Las Vegas, NV; Nashville, TN; and Pontiac, MI) to better understand their public high school experience. Most of the students told us they had high aspirations for their post-high school life, whether they planned to attend college or work (or, often, do both). They also told us that although their parents couldn't always be engaged in their education—because of things like work hours, language barriers, or their own limited education—they were very supportive of their children's education. Despite this positive outlook, many of the students told us about the challenges they had encountered in their public school experience, which they felt limited their access to a quality education experience.

Looking at the dots and thinking about your own experience, decide as a group:

- What problem or issue is most important for this area in your own community?
- What could make a difference?
- What do adults need to know about this?

#### QUOTES:

**Some students said that they did not feel that their schools promoted an inclusive environment. Some felt that they were judged based on their appearance (complexion, clothes), and felt that schools staff and peers sometimes slotted them into negative stereotypes.**

*"I just feel like there are a lot of stereotypes within the school and outside of school as well. And just like with the stereotypes they tend to bring people down and they say that there is no limit or no barrier and you have no boundaries and you can succeed as far as you want to go, but I feel that it isn't true. I feel like people are put in certain limits and they can't exceed those expectations." —English-speaking student, Las Vegas*

*"They just even expect you to fail. When I was in high school, so many of my friends you know we come in late to school and they look the part. You look the part. You look like you did something bad, but you are just trying to get to class. —English-speaking student, Orlando.*

**Some stated that they lack course materials and course work that is inclusive of their Latino identity, culture and history, and that this omission felt alienating.**

*"Like even in World History...they focus on like Asia and Africa and all that stuff and not like South America. South America is part of the world too." —English-speaking student, Orlando*

*"They forget that we are here and that we came from somewhere else." —English-speaking student, Orlando*

## Group 4: Identity and Discrimination

We spoke with 80 Latino students across the country (Orlando, FL; Las Vegas, NV; Nashville, TN; and Pontiac, MI) to better understand their public high school experience. Most of the students told us they had high aspirations for their post-high school life, whether they planned to attend college or work (or, often, do both). They also told us that although their parents couldn't always be engaged in their education—because of things like work hours, language barriers, or their own limited education—they were very supportive of their children's education. Despite this positive outlook, many of the students told us about the challenges they had encountered in their public school experience, which they felt limited their access to a quality education experience.

Looking at the dots and thinking about your own experience, decide as a group:

- What problem or issue is most important for this area in your own community?
- What could make a difference?
- What do adults need to know about this?

### QUOTES:

**A majority of students shared examples of discrimination and outright racism since President Trump's election. Stories range from students making jokes about the wall on the U.S.-Mexico border to strong fears of relatives being deported. Parents say that being Latino in the Trump era has made school difficult for their children and has generated fear among their social networks.**

*"I think currently there is racism. With the new president the racism has jumped to a higher level. The schools discriminate against students because they are Hispanics. Even if they were American-Mexican born in the U.S., they are still discriminated, just because they have Latin blood they are discriminated against in this country." — Spanish-speaking parent, Pontiac*

*"Now that he is President I was like the jokes for Hispanics have gotten way on a different level. Like, hey man are you going to help me go build a wall, stuff like that. It sounds funny or whatever but at the end of the day, it still hits you." —Spanish-speaking student, Las Vegas*

**Despite a difficult environment, most students evoked Latino culture as a foundation for resilience and perseverance, and a sense of collective pride. Students spoke of their culture as promoting positive values (humility, respect, affection, hard work), giving a sense of group belonging, and providing useful skills (bi-lingualism and bi-culturalism).**

*"[Being Latino], it makes us work harder. As the Latino community you have that mentality to work for our goals." — Nashville student*

*"We are unique. Hispanics, Latinos, I could be wrong but in my opinion, we are more humble and I think that makes the world better..." —Spanish-speaking student, Las Vegas*

*"You are bilingual. There are lots of opportunities when you know both languages." —Spanish-speaking student, Orlando*

## V. QUOTES FOR WALL

Enlarge and bold each quote (roughly 30 font) and place each on one page to be taped to wall. Students will circulate the room and place green or red stickers on each quote.

*“There are too many students to one class size. I feel that if teachers would get better pay, there would be more qualified teachers.”*

*“I am privileged enough to go to one of the schools that they do have all the textbooks and we do have computers and we have everything that you really need. But I know that problems exist in other schools and I think it is unfair.”*

*“Can I start off by saying the food? They serve pizza every day and it is Papa Johns and usually it is like cold or nasty. Or if they give you nuggets, they give three little pieces.”*

*“Sometimes it's hard to get scholarships because you are like not qualified enough for it, or academically don't have what those requirements are, and sometimes it's not even your fault, it's just you weren't prepared for those things. Or you don't have the proper resources to get to the scholarships.”*

*“For example, the ACT; I know that at my school they never really talked about it, and even from elementary school all the way up to high school, up until my last year, which is this year, no one's even really mentioned it or tried to prepare us for it.”*

*“They should hire better teachers. Some in my school, I don't learn the stuff they teach because of the way they teach. They are just putting stuff on board and giving out a work sheet.”*

*“There is a lack of time for teachers because of the volume of students. The school requires testing for the kids and makes them turn in reports, and that takes away time from the teachers. The teachers have that pressure, and if the students do not have the test scores where they should be, the teachers will be fired. And so, that stresses out the teachers.”*

*“My most important experience – and I think it was really life-changing for me – was one of my teachers. I was just getting picked on for stupid reasons, but she told me that I was not going to be defined by the mistakes of other people.”*

*“I wanted to talk to the counselor and the counselor cannot see me because she does not have time.”*

*“I didn’t know anything about AP classes...If you don’t have a specific question to ask them, they are not going to offer you any kind of information on their own.”*

*“I just feel like there are a lot of stereotypes within the school and outside of school as well. And just like with the stereotypes they tend to bring people down, They say that there is no limit or no barrier and you have no boundaries and you can succeed as far as you want to go, but I feel that it isn’t true. I feel like people are put in certain limits and they can’t exceed those expectations.”*

*“I feel like there are just some teachers that stereotype you. For example, like if I am late to a class or I had to go to a college career center or a meeting from a college and I come late, sometimes there are some teachers that just don’t give you a pass and they always assume I ditched. Like they assume things already before you speak.”*

*“Like even in World History class...they focus on like Asia and Africa and all that stuff and not on South America. South America is part of the world too.”*

*“The school staff, they forget that we are here and that we came from somewhere else.”*

*“I think currently there is racism. With the new president the racism has jumped to a higher level. The schools discriminate against students because they are Hispanics. Even if they were American-Mexican born in the U.S., they are still discriminated, just because they have Latin blood they are discriminated against in this country.”*

*“Now that Trump is President I was like the jokes for Hispanics have gotten way on a different level. Like, hey man are you going to help me go build a wall, stuff like that. It sounds funny or whatever but at the end of the day, it still hits you.”*

*“[Being Latino], it makes us work harder. As the Latino community you have that mentality to work for our goals.”*

*“We are unique. Hispanics, Latinos, I could be wrong but in my opinion, we are more humble and I think that makes the world better...”*

*“You are bilingual. There are lots of opportunities when you know both languages.”*