

'Inputs' that boost Latino students' test scores revealed in study

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Latina/o students' math and reading Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test scores improve when urban schools increase operating expenditures, decrease student-teacher ratios and increase the number of bilingual certified teachers, says a recent study from The University of Texas at Austin's College of Education.

The study, conducted by Dr. Julian Heilig, looked at the effects of financial expenditures, student demographics and teacher quality on Latina/o student achievement in large, urban, Texas elementary schools with primarily Latina/o student populations. Heilig used statistical models of Austin, Dallas and Houston schools to examine what "input changes" were associated with TAKS test score improvement for Latina/o students. In this context, "inputs" refers to contributing factors such as how much money a [school](#) spends on each student or the student-teacher ratio.

Heilig's research indicated that increasing operating expenditures and decreasing the student-teacher ratio are associated with higher TAKS [math achievement](#) scores. Increasing the percentage of bilingual certified teachers and decreasing student-teacher ratio is positively associated with TAKS [reading achievement](#) in urban schools with large Latina/o student populations.

Unlike previous studies, which according to Heilig "tossed everything into the same big bucket," his research is focused and specific, comparing large, urban, primarily Hispanic elementary schools with

similar schools rather than to schools in affluent white districts, for example.

"Although not on the top of the current legislative agenda, reductions in the [student](#)–teacher ratio appear to yield the most benefit for increasing both math and reading scores," said Heilig, an assistant professor in the College of Education's Department of Educational Administration.

"These findings may not hold true for schools and students of all types, but 'boutiqued' finance policy solutions for urban, majority Latina/o [elementary schools](#) may yield better results than the current one-size-fits-all school finance environment in Texas."

More information: ows.edb.utexas.edu/?q=node/1038

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

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