

Bilingual school counselors help narrow achievement gap

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The fastest growing group of students in America's K-12 schools are Latino. Evidence-based programs addressing the unique language and cultural needs of that population are successful in narrowing the traditional achievement gap, according to a recent study in *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation* (published by SAGE, on the behalf of the Association for Assessment in Counseling and Education).

Researchers Ana Leon, Elizabeth Villares, Greg Brigman, Linda Webb, and Paul Peluso studied 4th and 5th grade Spanish-speaking [students](#) across three separate schools who were enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. The students participated, for eight weeks of 45-minute segments, in a Spanish culturally-translated classroom program, led by bilingual/bicultural school counselors, that teaches students critical cognitive, social, and self-management skills necessary for academic achievement.

The study found significant improvements in reading and [math scores](#), as measured by standardized tests, for those students who received the specialized treatment, compared to the control group. These study findings position school counselors to show how their work directly affects student achievement.

"Lack of access to existing culturally appropriate programs can prevent Latina/o students from receiving beneficial educational opportunities and contributes to their drop-out rates and underachievement," conclude the authors. "The current study results provide the first indicators toward

establishing an evidence-based program that positively affects the [academic achievement](#) of Latina/o students and is an example of how school counselors can advocate for the needs of all students."

Provided by SAGE Publications

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