

Report: Arizona's Latino education gap could lead to state crisis

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New data and projections point to a future fiscal and economic crisis for Arizona unless the state's Latino educational attainment gap is addressed in a concerted and sustained manner, shows a report released by Morrison Institute for Public Policy.

"Dropped? Latino [Education](#) and Arizona's Economic Future" is a follow-up to Morrison Institute's 2001 landmark publication, "Five Shoes Waiting to Drop on Arizona's Future." The new report narrows its focus to education, noting that little or no progress among Latinos has occurred – and, in fact, has gotten worse in key measurements – despite the warnings a decade ago and the need for a high-skilled workforce in today's economy.

The 40-page report, funded by Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust and Helios Education Foundation, was released Friday at a forum attended by business leaders, educators, community leaders and policymakers.

Among the presenters and panelists discussing the findings, projections and data was Steve Murdock, the former director of the U.S. Census Bureau. The Rice University professor noted how similar projections in Texas helped galvanize an understanding and commitment to close the Latino education gap in that state as part of an overall economic strategy.

"This report isn't about ethnicity, but rather about economics, demographics and, in some respects, a failure a decade ago to deal with a critical education issue," said Susan Clark-Johnson, executive director of

Morrison Institute for Public Policy.

“Latinos eventually will comprise a majority of Arizonans and provide an increasingly larger share of the state’s leaders, workers and tax base. If we do not close the educational gap, all of Arizona will suffer the consequences. In truth, education in Arizona needs to be improved for all Arizonans. In an increasingly competitive global environment, our overall education achievement lags far behind that of too many countries,” she said.

Some key findings of the report note:

- In 1980, Latinos made up 16 percent of Arizona’s total population. Today, that number is 30 percent, as the state and nation continues to move toward a “majority-minority” populace.
- Latinos largely make up Arizona’s workforce of the future with the state already home to more Latinos under age 18 than Whites.
- Nearly 100 percent of Latino children under age five in Arizona are U.S. citizens, contrary to political rhetoric related to immigration.
- With the trend for lower average incomes and fewer jobs for low-skilled laborers, Arizona’s unemployment and poverty rates can be expected to worsen with a greater demand on state services and less revenue to pay for them.
- Projections show by 2030 the combined average income for Latinos and Whites in Arizona will drop to \$32,423 (in 2010 dollars), down from its \$39,667 comparable combined average, if income and education trends continue.

The report, with senior policy analyst Bill Hart and senior policy analyst C.J. Eisenbarth Hager as its principal authors, emphasizes the point that all of Arizona’s education must greatly improve in order for Arizona to

compete in the new economy.

“We are not preparing most of our students adequately to handle the competitive challenges of a global economy; and we are particularly failing to tap the enormous potential of Arizona’s fastest-growing population group,” the report states. “If Arizona does not deal with its current and increasingly significant educational attainment gap, the state faces a very real possibility of economic decline.”

Also included in the report, which was the result of a one-and-a-half-year project overseen by David Daugherty, director of research at Morrison Institute, are root causes of the Latino education gap and strategies to address the statewide problem.

Provided by Arizona State University

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