



**The Teacher Education Institutes Initiative by the National Latino Education  
Research Agenda Project (NLERAP)  
Full Proposal**

*Background*

In 2000, a national network of educators, community activists, university scholars, and other educational stakeholders within the broader Latino/a community joined to form the National Latino Education Research Agenda Project (NLERAP). The purpose was to engage in a consensus-building dialogue concerning the educational crisis confronting our communities across this nation and, in particular, an actionable research agenda that would address this reality. After a series of regional meetings, NLERAP's National Advisory Board developed and published a research agenda (NLERAP, 2003) that outlines the framework for the use of participatory and collaborative research approaches focused on influencing the experiences, progress, and outcomes of schooling for Latino/a youth. In addition to the research agenda document, the project also produced an academic volume (Pedraza and Rivera, 2005) that outline a community approach to the investigation of schooling for Latinos/as. In conjunction with the release of this volume, a press conference was held in Washington, D.C. that addressed an array of concerns related to Latino/a educational outcomes (Viadero, 2005). All of this prior work culminates and finds expression in a decision made by NLERAP's National Advisory Board on January 31, 2009, to pursue a national-level initiative termed the Teacher Education Institute (TEI) initiative.

The Teacher Education Institute initiative draws from a wealth of research that reveals the impact that quality teachers have on the learning and education of all youth. It also draws from the concept of multiple pathways that seek to partner public and secondary education institutions as a means of providing opportunities for students—in this case, future teachers—with the academic and real-world preparation that will facilitate their successful entry into their teaching careers (Oakes & Saunders, 2008). Having a quality classroom teacher means that students receive higher-order learning opportunities that are imaginative, engaging, and promote advanced levels of literacy and social skills development. Nationally, however, Latino/a students are systematically deprived of access to quality instruction and are more likely to attend poor, segregated, and under-resourced schools where quality instruction is frequently a scarce commodity (Darling-Hammond, 2000; 2003; Nieto, 2004). Since quality teachers are the single, most determining school-based factor that correlates to student achievement, graduation rates, and college eligibility among Latino/a youth (Darling-Hammond, 2003), the TEI initiative acquires added significance. If we are to begin addressing disparities in Latino/a students' opportunities to learn, national efforts must focus squarely on our children's teachers together with the

needs of English language learners (ELLs) whose growth rate exceeds that of any other student sub-population in our nation's schools (Fry & Gonzales, 2008; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2006).

### *Teacher Education Institutes Initiative*

The underlying goal of the Teacher Education Institutes initiative is to creatively foster multiple pathways into teacher preparation programs and the ultimate licensure of a new, highly skilled teacher workforce equipped with best practices for educating Latina/o youth and that consists of individuals who will later teach either in the exact same, or other similar, Latino/a communities from where they emanate (see Oakes and Saunders, 2008). This will be accomplished by adjoining the resources of public and postsecondary institutions that share a goal of increasing the number of certified, quality teachers in select communities nationwide where high concentrations of English language learners may be found.

Our “grow-your-own-teacher” strategy, as it were, is an extended, multi-year commitment that seeks to invigorate under-resourced schools and communities with an on-going, infusion of human, material, and intellectual resources in order to address the teacher shortage and teacher preparation crises in our nation, particularly for ELLs. Since we also know that Latino/a teachers are more likely to teach in hard-to-staff schools (Villegas, 2007; Villegas & Clewell, 1998) and have higher retention rates than their white peers in these same schools (Villegas, 2009; Kirby, Berends, & Neftel, 1999), a significant, positive return may be expected. As the policy arm to NLERAP, TCEP plans to engage existing teacher preparation programs and policies with an eye toward understanding and addressing the intricacies of multi-level policies (local, state, and national) and policy streams that either positively address or perpetuate the under-supply of quality teachers across the initiative's Southwest, Midwest, West, Southeast, and Northeast regions that we have targeted for the reform, nationally.

The realization of meeting the TEI initiative's goals will result in pre-service and current teachers' increased ability to:

- affirm and build upon the linguistic and cultural heritage of Latino/a students;
- develop critical literacies in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy, science, and personal financial as well as sociocultural and political awareness;
- foster critical-thinking skills among students that will facilitate their intellectual and social endeavors;
- nurture a commitment to community participation, action, and civic engagement among students; and
- foster physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being.

*Working timeline (October 1, 2009 to December, 31 2010):* With the support of the Ford Foundation, NLERAP will embark on a fifteen-month planning period during which the newly-situated NLERAP national office at the University of Texas at Austin will collaborate

with the current national office in New York and its current executive director, Dr. Pedro Pedraza and director, Dr. Melissa Rivera, to outline the foundation and framework for the Teacher Education Institute initiative. Over the course of fifteen months, the Ford Foundation will support the incoming national office in carrying out the following agenda items:

- hold a two-day national board meeting in Austin, Texas in the month of January, 2010 to transition the new national office to Dr. Angela Valenzuela and unfold the vision, timeline, and goals for NLERAP's first year;
- develop an outline of the NLERAP Teacher Institute initiative that articulates its organization, governance, and decision-making structure for the national and regional levels (see Figure 1: NLERAP Organizational Structure);
- identify a list of prospective partnering districts and schools across each of the five regions who meet the criteria for serving as TEI sites (see Figure 2: NLERAP Relationship Diagram);
- hold five meetings with advisory board members of the Southwest, Midwest, West, Southeast, and Northeast to provide an overview of the national toolkit;
- conduct background research to gain a comprehensive understanding of current state and federal policies that impact the recruitment, preparation, support, and retention of Latino/a teachers across the five NLERAP regions;
- co-develop a national toolkit with the outgoing national office that will guide each of the regional sites on information to include the following:
  - a) Outline the procedures, policies, parameters, and governance of the national and regional advisory boards.
  - b) Protocol, principles, and parameters for establishing regional partnership agreements, memoranda of understanding, and contractual agreements that would include Community Based Organizations (CBO), high performing schools (i.e., schools with high graduation rates), colleges of education, research institutes, and any other partners deemed necessary to ensure success at the local level by the regional advisory boards.
  - c) Outline the regional protocols, governance parameters, and connection to the national office, more specifically the Texas Center for Education Policy, Washington, D.C., and the NLERAP national advisory board.

*Organizational Structure:* To carry out the overall goals of NLERAP and the Teacher Education Institute initiative, the following oversight at the national level, followed by implementation at the regional, levels will be carried out:

- **National Offices:** Beginning on September 1, 2009, NLERAP's national offices will be located at the Texas Center for Education Policy (TCEP) at the University of Texas at Austin, under the direction of Dr. Angela Valenzuela, who also serves as the Associate Vice-President for School Partnerships within the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. Dr. Valenzuela will oversee the efforts of five regional sites (Southwest, Midwest, West, Southeast, and Northeast). The national site, in collaboration with the current national office, and the NLERAP National Advisory

Board, will develop a national NLERAP model for teacher preparation and recruitment with general principles, protocols, and parameters on which all regional projects will be based.

- National Advisory Board: The NLERAP National Advisory Board members will advise on the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Teacher Education Institute initiative via annual board meetings and committee work. Between September 1, 2009 and December 31, 2010, the national advisory board will attend four meetings in the following locations: California, Chicago, Georgia, New York, and Austin.
- A NLERAP national Participatory Action Research Collective will further be established and subsequently responsible for developing the research design for the national evaluation of the regional Teacher Education Institutes.
- A NLERAP national Pedagogy and Curriculum Advisory Committee will be responsible for developing the framework for the teacher education program and the structure of courses that will be utilized across the five regional sites.
- Each of five Regional NLERAP Advisory Boards will be responsible for developing, implementing, and coordinating local Teacher Education Institute efforts. This would include the establishment of each regional initiative's project organization, partnerships, and the adaptation of the national model to meet the needs of their respective communities, as well as the hiring of local staff. Regional advisory board members will also be required to attend an annual meeting to report on the status of their local TEI sites.
- University faculty and graduate students from universities across the country will be involved in designing and enacting participatory action research projects that focus on the regional implementation process and its impact on teacher preparation, student learning, and school culture.

### *Research and evaluation of outcomes*

Each TEI site will embark on a one-year planning phase that will involve the national office, national advisory board, and each of the five regional advisory boards developing a short- and long-term method of evaluation. NLERAP seeks to design and conduct research that ensures Latino/a students are educated in a way that facilitates their holistic development, as well as their full and equal participation in broader social, economic, and political contexts. The research processes that guides and supports NLERAP's goals are as follows:

- develop methods that both identify best practices while improving educational conditions that support Latino/a students and communities;
- develop an actionable framework that will partner educators, community advocates, and families in improving educational practices and policies;

- document and disseminate findings from the action-oriented research occurring in the Latino/a communities.

An added, and longer-term, benefit of the evaluation model will be to generate a well-informed agenda and action plan for Latino/a K-12 educational research that honors the participation of Latino/a community members, practitioners, and university-based researchers. From this agenda, sound recommendations can advise and guide researchers, policymakers, educators, families, community organizations, and other institutions on important educational issues that impact Latino/a communities. The national office, and more specifically the Texas Center for Education Policy, will draw from this work and serve as the vehicle for making NLERAP's research and the TEI's practices accessible to national policy makers.

### *Indicators of success*

By the end of the fifteen-month funding term, we intend to measure NLERAP's progress toward achieving the project's objectives through the following:

- a finished guideline that draws from an overview of the input shared by national advisory board members at the January, 2010 meeting;
- a finished framework for the NLERAP Teacher Education Institute initiative that will be made available to each of the five regional offices that outlines the organization, governance, and decision-making structure;
- produce a report outlining the candidates that each of the regions have identified as potential partnering districts and schools and that meet the criteria for serving as TEI sites;
- a concise narrative that draws from the minutes and overview from five meetings with advisory members of the Southwest, Midwest, West, Southeast, and Northeast to introduce and review the national toolkit;
- produce four research briefs outlining the impact of current state and federal across the following four areas: recruitment, preparation, support, and retention of Latino/a teachers;
- produce research-based policy briefs and recommendations at the state and federal levels that will promote the recruitment, preparation, support, and retention of Latino/a teachers;
- a finished national toolkit that will be provided to each of the five regional offices outlining the following:
  - a. Procedures, policies, parameters, and governance of the national and regional boards.
  - b. Protocol, principles, and parameters for establishing regional partnership agreements, memoranda of understanding, and contractual agreements that would include CBO's, high-performing schools, colleges of education, research institutes, and any other partners deemed necessary to ensure success at the local level by the regional boards.

- c. Regional protocols, governance parameters, and connection to the Texas Center for Education Policy, Washington, D.C., and the NLERAP national board.

### *Conclusion*

Currently, Latino/as are the largest minority group nationally (Falcon, 2004) and have accounted for over half (50.5%) of the nation's population growth from 2000 to 2007 (Fry, 2008). National projections on the growth of Latino/a school-aged children and youth indicate that by 2025, three-in-ten children will be of Latino/a ancestry (Fry and Passel, 2009). In states like Texas and California, these numbers are even greater where Latino/as comprise 50 and 40 percent of all students, respectively (Fry & Gonzalez, 2008). Trends in the schooling experiences among Latino/a youth reveal that these students are most likely to attend poor, segregated, and under-resourced schools where they are systematically deprived of access to quality instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2000; 2003; Nieto, 2004). As the representation of Latino/as continue to increase in number, it is critical that efforts to improve their opportunities for learning, access to quality instruction and curriculum, and the resources and supports that will facilitate their eligibility and completion of a college degree are a national priority.

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## Appendices

Figure 1: NLERAP Organizational Structure

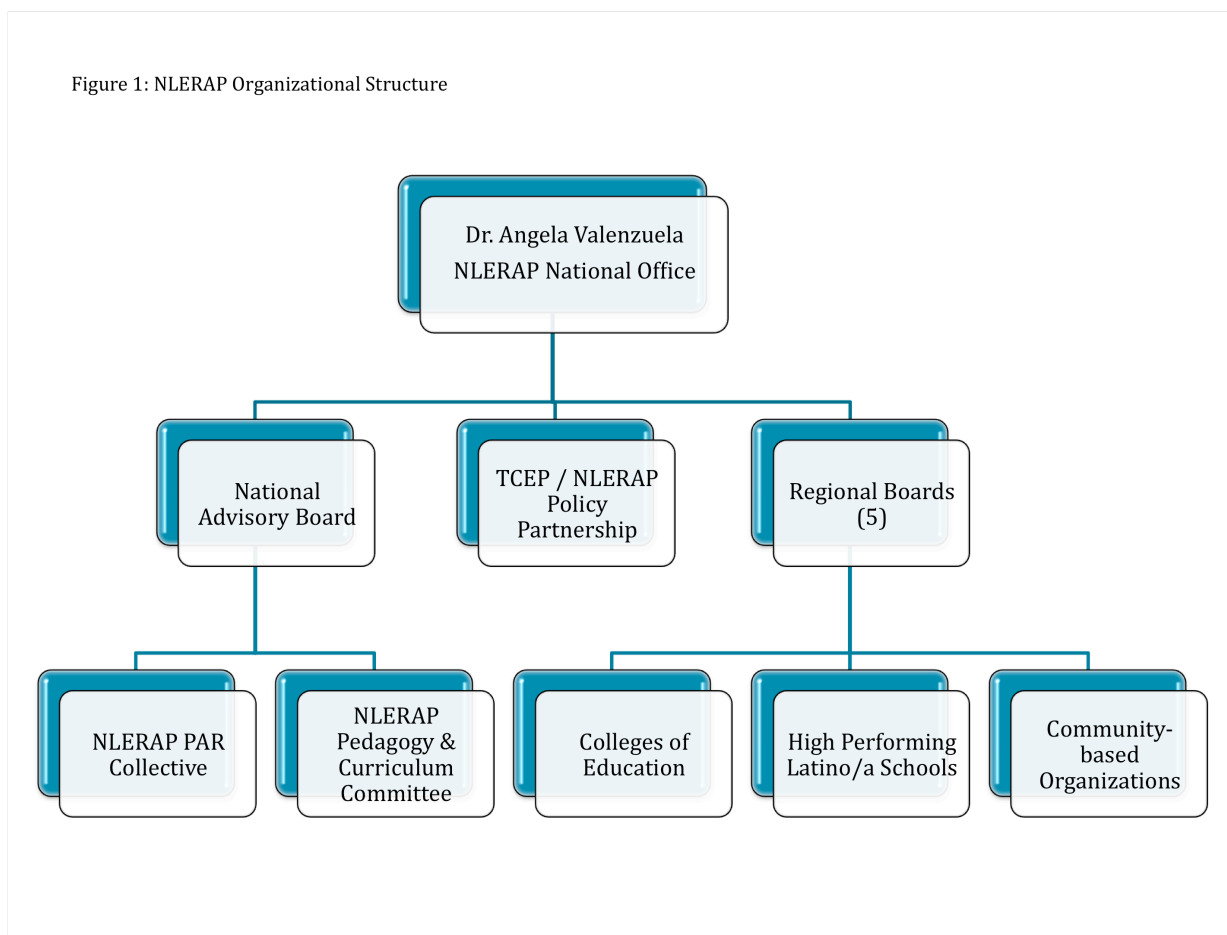


Figure 2: NLERAP Relationship Diagram

