

**School Support for Spanish-Speaking Immigrant Youth:
Challenges and Opportunities for the East Durham Children's Initiative**

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INTRODUCTION

The face of immigration in the United States has undergone significant change in the country's two hundred and fifty year history. What started as colonization from England and other European countries transformed into a continuous influx from Latin America and Asia. Projections estimate that 23.7% of immigrants hail from Mexico thus far in 2010, a percentage almost five times greater than that of any other country. Of all legal permanent residents in the United States, over a quarter come from Mexico alone (Nationmaster.com). Due to the scale of migration to the United States by native Spanish speakers, immigration has been propelled into the political spotlight, prompting debates over the role that immigrants, and particularly undocumented immigrants, should play in various aspects of life in the United States.

Hispanics now constitute approximately 16% of the United States population and account for about half of the total U.S. population growth since 2000 ("Hispanic Population of the United States" 2009). In just the past ten years, North Carolina's Hispanic population grew by 400 percent. This extraordinary growth is evident through the demographic shifts in student enrollment at Durham Public Schools. Over a seven year period, the proportion of Hispanic students in the district doubled, from 10% to 19.1% (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction). Not all of the population growth can be attributed to immigration, but immigrant students certainly constitute a greater proportion of the student population than in past years. However, schools demonstrate below-average passing rates for students with Limited English Proficiency on North Carolina End of Grade tests, which indicates that the systems in place at schools may not be equipped to handle greater numbers of students with English language learning needs (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction).

The East Durham Children's Initiative (EDCI) is an organization that focuses community outreach and empowerment services on a 120-block sector in the eastern zone of Durham, North Carolina. The breadth of the EDCI encompasses attendance zones for Y.E. Smith Elementary School, Neal Middle School, and Southern High School. It aims to create "a pipeline of services from cradle to career" for the children of East Durham. The EDCI commits itself to the improvement of current policies in addition to the research and development of policies successfully implemented or yet to be established elsewhere.

As the East Durham Children's Initiative continues to expand and improve, it is essential that the organization continues to assess the needs of the population within its borders and cater its programming towards those needs. This means that the EDCI must focus increasingly on the growing Hispanic population. The term "Hispanic" refers to a person who comes from, or whose ancestors come from, a Spanish-speaking country. In the case of North Carolina and most of the United States, "Hispanic" generally refers to persons of Mexican descent. However, populations of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Central or South Americans, and other variations of Hispanic live in visible numbers in the United States as well. As adult immigrants attempt to find employment and re-establish their lives in the U.S., children are confronted with the daunting task of entering a school system with a different culture and native language than the one they left in their home country. Due to increasing population growth coupled with a negative trend in academic attainment, the East Durham Children's Initiative's awareness of this group's particular obstacles can serve as both a vital tool in expanding the EDCI's comprehensiveness and a highly valuable component of support to its Spanish-speaking students.

Targeting immigrant students through transitional support and programming will help alleviate any adverse effects of this population's growth in Durham Public Schools on student

achievement. The various difficulties that immigrant students face in adjusting to the American school system present a great challenge to the school staffs responsible for their students' development. Though every school works within the constraints of time and money to serve its students to the best of its abilities, there are still visible achievement gaps and obstacles which must be eliminated. In order for schools to more effectively aid immigrant students in overcoming these impediments, the district must acknowledge the broad range of student needs presented and permit schools to use available knowledge about their students in order to determine effective strategies for improvement.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to cater programming support to Spanish-speaking immigrant students, it is necessary that the East Durham Children's Initiative develop a concise picture of how this student group performs academically, but also determine the specific challenges that immigrant students face in the process of school adjustment. In addition to a basic outline of the services provided in Durham schools to address these challenges, an investigation of each school's particular strategies for evaluation must be taken into account. Rather than focus solely on the forms of support available for students, a closer look at how schools judge success and where they see their own limitations will allow the EDCI to more effectively address unmet needs for immigrant students in Durham and incorporate valuable strategies into the programming it offers. The research questions follow as such:

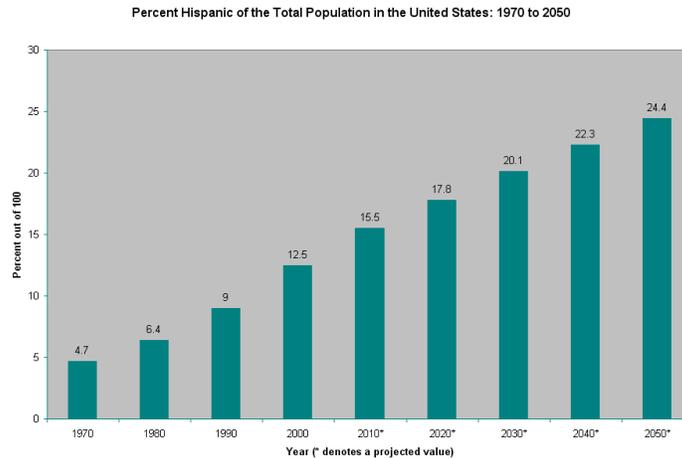
- What are the challenges facing Spanish-speaking immigrant students as they transition into Durham Public Schools?
- In what ways do Durham public schools address these problems and their effects?
- How effectively do Durham public schools address these challenges?
- How do schools assess their level of success in providing immigrant transition support?
- Where do schools feel they are succeeding? Where do they feel that more attention and/or resources are necessary?
- How can successful programs be transferred from one school to another, particularly to the East Durham Children's Initiative?

Using support from prior literature and published data with respect to the academic performance at the elementary, middle, and high school level in Durham, research in five public schools explores the specific challenges students face and the ways in which each school addresses its students' needs. This school-based perspective provides a means of comparison across school, school level, and in the context of wider implications for the EDCI as it attempts to adopt successful strategies for its students' benefit.

IMMIGRATION AND ITS ROLE IN SCHOOLS

Trends in Hispanic Immigration

Over the past decade, the United States has experienced exponential growth in the Hispanic population. In the year 2000, Hispanics made up 12.5% of the U.S. population; they now constitute roughly 16%. Since 2000, Hispanics have accounted for approximately half of the United States' population increases. The national growth rate for the Hispanic population, 24.3%, is greater than three times the 6.1% growth rate of the overall population. ("Hispanic Population of the United States" 2009). In addition, the rate of Hispanic immigration to the United States is expected to increase significantly in subsequent decades. It is predicted that by 2050, between 25-30% of the United States population will be comprised of Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau).



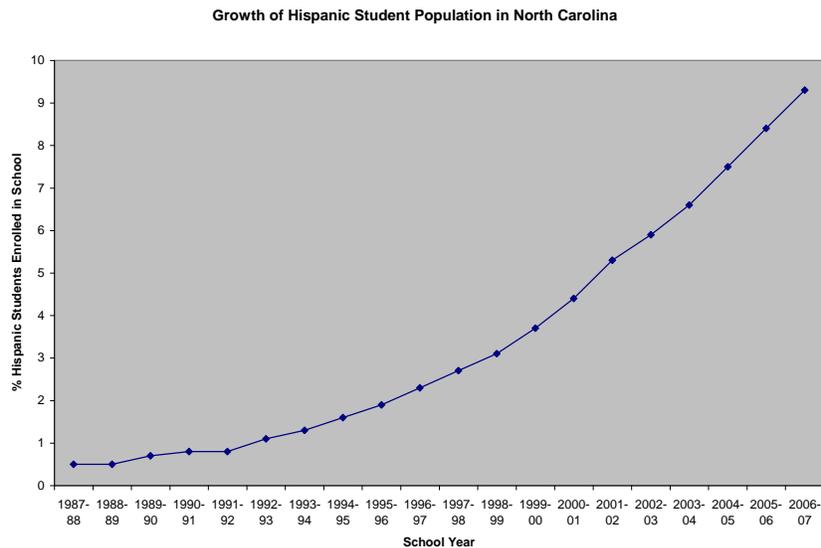
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses; Population Projections, July 1, 2010 to July 1, 2050.

The immigration trends in North Carolina closely mirror those of the nation. The state’s Hispanic population is one of the fastest growing of any state – while the nation’s Hispanic population increased by 355 percent over the past thirty years, the growth of the Hispanic population in North Carolina over the same period exceeded 1,000 percent. (“North Carolina Latinos” 2003). In just the past ten years, North Carolina’s Hispanic growth rate approached 400 percent (Kasarda 2006).

Both in North Carolina and the nation as a whole, the demographic characteristics of Hispanic immigrants differ markedly from national averages. Hispanics are generally younger, less educated, and more likely to live in poverty than the average American. The fertility rate for the Hispanic population is also noticeably higher than the average national fertility rate. This disproportionately young population not only indicates the importance of appropriate education and job training mechanisms for recent immigrants, but also suggests that even if the immigration rate were to slow, the Hispanic population in North Carolina would continue to grow steadily as a result of the natural birth rate (Kasarda 2006).

The North Carolina School System

Hispanic immigration to North Carolina has also impacted the state school system. Since 2004, Hispanic enrollment in North Carolina public schools has accounted for approximately sixty percent of total enrollment increases. Enrollment of Hispanic students in public schools has grown by 2,614% in comparison to a 24% overall increase in student enrollment in the state (Kasarda 2006). In North Carolina Public Schools, Hispanic students currently make up roughly ten percent of the total population; in 2000, this number was only 3.7 percent (“A History of Pupil Membership by Race” 2007).

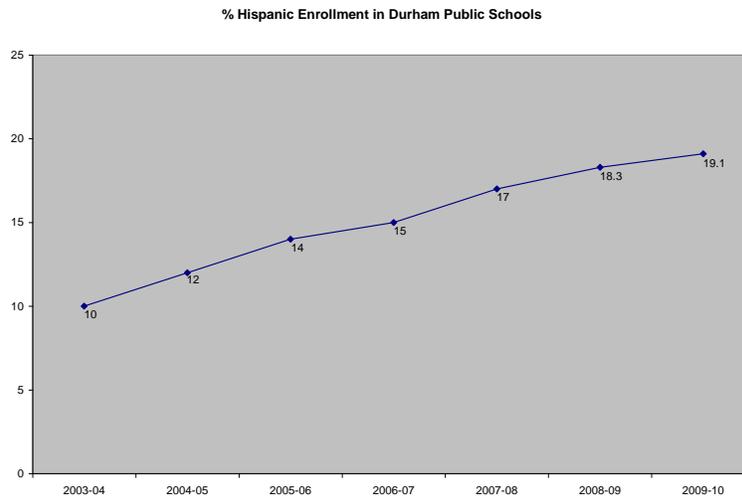


School Year	% Hispanic Enrollment	School Year	% Hispanic Enrollment
1987-88	0.5	1996-97	2.3
1988-89	0.5	1997-98	2.7
1989-90	0.7	1998-99	3.1
1990-91	0.8	1999-00	3.7
		2000-01	4.4
1991-92	0.8	2001-02	5.3
1992-93	1.1	2002-03	5.9
1993-94	1.3	2003-04	6.6
1994-95	1.6	2004-05	7.5
1995-96	1.9	2005-06	8.4
1991-92	0.8	2006-07	9.3

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

The increase in enrollment of Hispanic students is evident in Durham Public Schools. In a seven year period, the proportion of Hispanic students in the district doubled. In the 2003-2004

academic year, Hispanics comprised 10% of the student population. That number grew to 19.1% in the 2009-2010 school year.

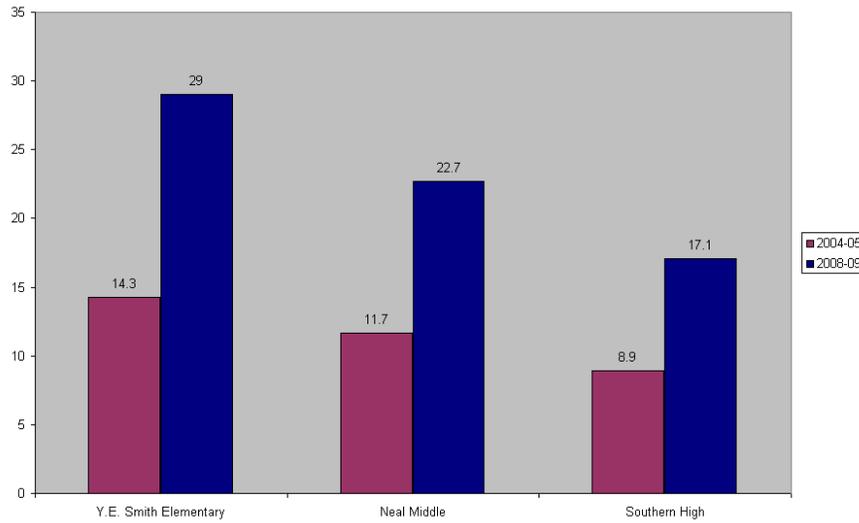


Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction: “Grade, Race, Sex”

Hispanic Students in the East Durham Children’s Initiative

The drastic growth of the Hispanic population in North Carolina and in Durham Public Schools creates a unique opportunity for the East Durham Children’s Initiative. Y.E. Smith Elementary School, Neal Middle School, and Southern High School – the schools within the EDCI’s jurisdiction – each experienced noticeable increases in Hispanic enrollment over the past five years. While the population increase is more noticeable at Y.E. Smith Elementary and Neal Middle, these students will contribute to a gradual but steady change at Southern High in the future. The two figures below display the growth in Hispanic enrollment at Smith, Neal, and Southern in the 2004-05 and 2008-09 school years, represented both by proportional growth and total enrollment changes. Y.E. Smith and Neal enroll a higher percentage of Hispanics students compared to their total student population, while Southern has the largest number of Hispanics. In just the four-year period recorded below, the Hispanic population at each of the three schools at least doubled.

% Hispanic Population in EDCI Schools



Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction: School Report Cards.

Day 20 Enrollment Numbers of Hispanic Students

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Y.E. Smith Elementary	114	N/A	86	73	67
Neal Middle	135	N/A	132	127	109
Southern High	192	N/A	189	167	153

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

These schools exhibit low passing rates for students classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) on End of Grade tests, both when compared with aggregate percentages in Durham Public Schools and the state of North Carolina. Currently, Y.E. Smith and Southern perform above the average for the district, but slightly below the average for the state. Y.E. Smith, while still above district and state averages, exhibits a large decline in passing rates. Southern has experienced an increase, and Neal is consistently and substantially lower-performing than the rest of the district and state.

Percentage of Students with Limited English Proficiency Passing End-of-Grade Tests

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
State of North Carolina	34.6	19.8	38.3	34.8	49.7
Durham Public Schools	28.5	13.8	31.7	32.2	42.2
Y.E. Smith Elementary	32.1	<5	31.3	46.2	63.6
Neal Middle	18.6	<5	11.1	14.9	21.1
Southern High	30	30.1	16.7	30.1	12.5

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, School Report Cards

Value of Investing in the Hispanic Immigrant Student Population

Over the past ten years, Hispanic mobility rates after an initial move into the area have decreased. While the rate of Hispanic mobility into the United States, North Carolina, and Durham continue to increase, immigrants, once settled, tend to stay in the same area and school system. Providing appropriate resources and support to this population is a worthwhile investment due to their increased likelihood of permanency; resources supplied will not be lost due to high rates of student turnover (Xu 2009). An investment in suitable education for immigrants now creates a much more secure guarantee of success as these students aspire to pursue higher education and enter the job force.

Conceptual Framework

When Hispanic immigrant students first enter the Durham Public School system, they face difficult obstacles that hinder a quick, seamless transition. The accumulation of the many changes students must take in stride can result in varying degrees of stress on a student’s academic, social, and psychological development. Many of the adverse outcomes that threaten the success of immigrant students build off each other; disconnectedness in one aspect of their academic or extracurricular life could easily transfer into other areas with equally negative consequences. These challenges include student achievement, development of stable student-

adult relationships, social network formation, stress and isolation, school involvement, and risk of dropout.

The following research serves as the framework for investigation. The indicators listed will provide the outline by which to assess the programs, services, and support available at schools in Durham. Through interviews with school staff, these indicators address both the breadth of services available and the quality of programming. Conversations with the various interviewees inquire as to how schools assist students in addressing these indicators, and whether they feel the school adequately attends to them.

Student Achievement

Immigrant students entering the U.S. school system for the first time are at an extreme disadvantage when it comes to academic attainment (Xu 2007). Mobility and school adjustment lead to a higher risk for drop out (South 2007). Depending on the grade level at which student enters school and their academic abilities at the time of arrival, achievement gaps can be extraordinarily difficult to overcome. For this reason, many Hispanic students struggle initially as they learn to navigate the classroom and its academic expectations. While their underperformance upon arrival warrants attention and support, it should also be acknowledged that these students have a demonstrated ability to successfully transition into their schools and achieve high academic attainment if supported effectively (Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor 2006). The question is how well schools are able to close these achievement gaps for all students, and whether these improvements result in lasting change in a student's academic pursuits.

Development of Stable Student-Adult Relationships

The transition a student experiences as a result of immigration may lead to detrimental effects on the student's relationships with the adults in their lives. For youth of all ages, solid

relationships with adults – teachers, parents, administrators, and others who serve as role models and mentors – serve as stable and dependable support during student development. Lost contact can have strongly negative impacts on a students’ attitude towards school, source of comfort in the midst of a stressful life event, and state of emotional well-being (South 2007).

The quality of relationship formation between teachers and students plays an instrumental role in students’ academic success. The importance of this relationship is manifested through the genuineness of student-teacher interactions. Students repeatedly cite uncaring or indifferent teachers as a contributing factor to their frustrations with school. If students struggle with their schoolwork or the social atmosphere of their school’s culture, quality student-teacher relationships can counteract these potentially negative influences on a student’s feeling of disconnectedness (Delgado-Gaitan 1988).

Although the value of significant student-adult relationships remains a vital force in student success throughout the entirety of their academic career, the preservation of such relationships during a student’s high school career has the most powerful impact on whether or not a student drops out before graduating. The vast majority of students who drop out do so in high school due to North Carolina law mandating all adolescents to stay enrolled in school until at least the age of sixteen. Without the influence of adults to mediate the stresses and frustrations of school life, many students find dropping out to be a much more rational decision than fighting through their problems in order to graduate (Delgado-Gaitan 1988). While the importance of adult support throughout the entirety of a student’s academic career should not be undervalued, adult mentors and role models are particularly important at the high school level when they can play a large part in keeping students in school.

Social Network Formation

As can be expected as a student enters a new school, it is often difficult to learn the nuances of the established school culture, especially when a student first begins to assimilate into the school system. They have neither a large circle of friends nor close acquaintances that they can trust, and find themselves outside of the existing hierarchy of their fellow students (South 2007).

Fortunately, social disconnectedness does not point towards delinquent activity as an outlet for frustration or discontentment. Students considered “loners” are less likely to participate in questionable activity or exhibit behavioral problems. However, their lack of a secure peer network harms their academic performance. They tend to spend less time on their schoolwork and receive worse grades than students who have a reliable social circle in which to interact on a day-to-day basis (South 2007).

Stress and Isolation

The process of moving into a new area and creating a new lifestyle and routine causes stress in a student’s life, no matter his or her age. This adjustment risks damaging an adolescent’s self-identity and self-confidence as their former self-understanding is tested in the midst of a new geographic home and a different set of peers with whom to interact. Immigrant students experience this effect to a significantly more extreme degree than do American students moving from one city or school district to another – the culture shock of the United States, assimilating into the school system, and adjusting to the distance from friends and family all contribute to a drastic life transition. The transition tests the resilience and determination of students, often at a very young age (South 2007).

Additionally, mobile students experience higher rates of depression and lower self-esteem. Mobility tends to have a negative effect on the psychological wellbeing of students due

to the general anxiety that accompanies significant life events and changes. However, this lower level of emotional wellbeing does not provide a clear causal link to dropping out of school, though it is possible that the underlying effects of depression and low self-esteem lead to lower overall academic achievement and other adverse outcomes (South 2007).

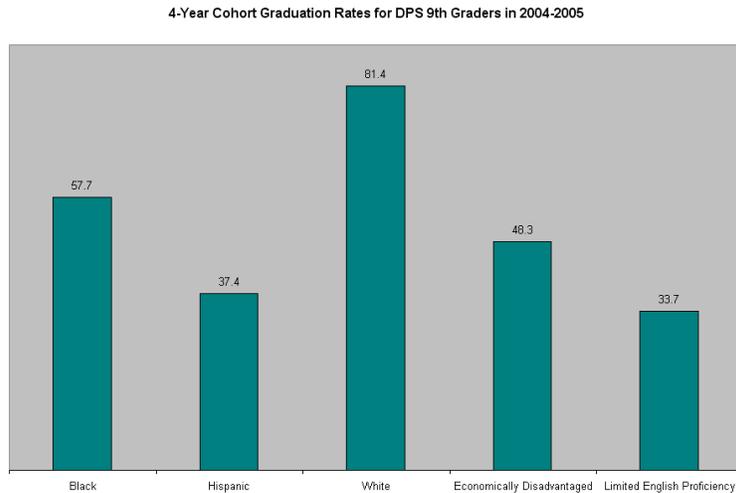
School Involvement

Without firm attachment to a school, students also participate less actively in extracurricular activities. These activities serve as opportunities to gain nonacademic skills and expand social networks beyond those developed during class time. Lower participation in extracurricular activities impedes the process by which students develop a sense of loyalty and attachment to their school, which can perpetuate any feelings of disconnectedness due to other factors. It is also very possible that dropout rates for immigrant students can be correlated with the extent to which they participate in the daily life and routine of their schools (South 2007).

Risk of Dropout

The overall graduation rate in North Carolina for the 2008-2009 school year was 69.9%, a number that has improved slowly since the mid-1990's when it hovered just above sixty percent ("2008 Cohort Graduation Rate Released"). Though the graduation rate in Durham and in North Carolina demonstrated increases over time, there are severe educational inequalities among specific demographic groups. Hispanic and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students have the lowest aggregate graduation rates in all of Durham Public Schools. In the cohort of DPS 9th grade students in 2004-2005, white students graduated at a rate of 81.4%, while 57.7% of black students and 37.4% of Hispanic students graduated. Of additional concern is the 33.7% graduation rate for students with Limited English Proficiency ("Disconnected Youth in the Research Triangle Region" 2008). The alarmingly low graduation rate for Hispanic and LEP

students, especially in relation to the white population, demands closer attention – why does this group of students experience such low success rates while their classmates achieve at consistently higher levels?



Source: “Disconnected Youth in the Research Triangle Region.”

The low retention and graduation rates at Southern High School reveal that the EDCI’s outreach, if able to target groups in need, could have a powerful impact on the success of the students and overall community it serves. In comparison to the state graduation rate of 69.9% and district graduation rate of 63% (“2008 LEA Cohort Graduation Rate”), Southern High School’s graduation rate falls around 58% (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Due to its plans for expansion in the coming years and the growing number of Hispanics in its student population, conclusions and recommendations focus on the East Durham Children’s Initiative and the means by which to meet schools where they stand in order to provide the most valuable support possible. To evaluate how the EDCI facilitates school transition for immigrant students, I conducted interviews at Neal Middle School and Southern High School. However, I was unable to do so at Y.E. Smith Elementary School. Data provided

by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction creates a basic picture of the elementary school's academic standing, but no additional data were collected from Y.E. Smith to gauge its ability to address other indicators.

I assessed three comparable schools in Durham to create a comprehensive picture of immigrant transition support available in the district at present. More than basic academic support, immigrant transition programs must account for the social, cultural, and psychological adjustment of its students into the mainstream school system. Therefore, the factors taken into consideration must expand beyond the foundational academic resources available. English as a Second Language is a piece of the puzzle, but in order to implement truly successful immigrant transition policy, other factors must be considered.

Schools of Interest

Selecting the three additional Durham schools in which to conduct research required a search for schools with a demographic make-up and a student population closely resembling those of Y.E. Smith Elementary, Neal Middle, and Southern High. I chose demographic composition as the differentiating factor because the more similar the student population, the more overlap there will likely be in availability of resources. I also ruled out year-round schools due to the different academic model; schools that function throughout the course of the calendar year have the ability to structure transition programs and language support differently than do schools with a two-month summer vacation. Additionally, small specialty schools were eliminated from consideration because a significantly smaller student body has a drastic effect on the allocation of resources and the faculty-student ratio.

School	Total Population	% Am. Indian	% Asian	% Black	% Hispanic	% White
E.K. Powe ES	372	0.00	1.34	49.46	35.75	13.44
Y.E. Smith ES	346	0.29	0.00	64.45	32.95	2.31
Lowe's Grove MS	629	0.00	2.54	71.54	20.51	5.41
Neal MS	628	0.00	0.16	73.09	21.34	5.41
C.E. Jordan HS	1890	0.32	5.98	41.80	13.97	37.94
Southern HS	1101	0.18	0.27	76.75	17.26	5.54

The student demographics at E.K. Powe Elementary School are a close match to those at Y.E. Smith. Y.E. Smith's student body is composed of 33% Hispanics, 65% blacks, and 2% whites. E.K. Powe's student body is 36% Hispanic, 50% black, 13% white, and 1% Asian. Several schools are comprised of similar percentages of Hispanic students, but E.K. Powe Elementary captured the specific demographic variation more clearly than nearly all other elementary school in the district. Few other schools with high proportions of Hispanic students exhibit noticeably higher percentages of black student enrollment; E.K. Powe was a close match. Also, the total enrollment at the two schools is fairly similar.

Lowe's Grove Middle School is a nearly perfect match to Neal Middle School in terms of student composition and population size. Neal Middle School's student body is 21% Hispanic, 73% black, and 5% white. The population at Lowe's Grove is comprised of 21% Hispanics, 72% blacks, 5% whites, and 3% Asians. The schools are also almost exactly the same size. Their striking similarities provide a clear model for comparison and were by far the easiest schools to match for the sake of assessment and analysis.

Finding a school whose demographic composition matches Southern High School was more challenging. The student population at Southern is 17% Hispanic, 77% black, and 6%

white. It also has the highest percentage of Hispanic students in the entire district, though not the largest number of students based on size. Riverside High School has the largest student Hispanic population, but due to larger school size, Hispanics comprise a smaller proportion of the total school population. Hillside High School most closely resembles Southern in terms of a very high percentage of black students and a very low proportion of white students, but the Hispanic population at Hillside is much smaller than at Southern. Besides Hillside and Southern, all other high schools have significantly larger numbers of white students. Due to the importance of a representative Hispanic population, I selected C.E. Jordan High School for comparison.

Although white students comprise a higher proportion of the student population (37%), it is also a school with a well-developed ESL program. Upon further investigation, it should serve as a great model and resource for Southern High School and the East Durham Children's Initiative.

Another important distinction is not only the demographic make-up of the schools, but also the composition of the Spanish-speaking population. Given the immigration trends to North Carolina in the past ten years, it is likely that many of the students, and particularly the younger students, were born in the United States. A larger and larger number of native Spanish speakers are first or second generation U.S. citizens; it will be crucial to take into account the adjustments to transition programs based on the number of students who are indeed immigrants and those whose families consist of immigrants even if the students themselves are not. While a focus will be placed on immigrant students, the inclusion of support programs for native Spanish-speakers who are not immigrants will complement and expand upon the base of potential resources and knowledge available for this population of students.

Conducting Interviews

In order to gain an all-encompassing perspective in each school, I sought out interviews with pre-determined staff members, some held as a standard across schools and others dependent on the particular school structure. After establishing contact with each school through its principal, I interview English as a Second Language teachers, administrative figures, classroom teachers, and guidance counselors. The specific staff members I interviewed at each school were dependent upon the specific structure of the school and who spends the most time with immigrant students. I conducted between two and five interviews at each school. By speaking with a variety of employees, it is possible to provide assessments and evaluations with a comprehensive picture of support mechanisms available in schools. These interviews provide a firsthand look at how the challenges facing immigrant students manifest themselves in the classroom, and how schools use their resources to help this distinct population of students.

Indicators to be Evaluated

In-school interviews with various employees at each of the five sites determined how schools support Spanish-speaking immigrants during the transition process, how schools evaluate their own effectiveness, and where schools feel their strengths and weaknesses lie. The indicators for evaluation include those developed in prior research: student achievement, development of stable student-adult relationships, social network formation, stress and isolation, school involvement, and risk of dropout. Because some of the indicators are more significant at different levels of schooling, not all will be assessed at each school level. However, the majority do apply in some capacity.

Academic achievement is evaluated at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Statewide standards from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction inform basic

information such as aggregate academic performance and academic performance of subgroups. This data provides a clearer picture of each school's success with its students based on a common evaluation tool. In addition, in-school interviews address the improvement of these subgroups over time, and focus on immigrant and ESL students. Staff within the school has a better understanding of whether individual students and student groups make progress over the course of their time in school. In addition, interviews clarified the strategies schools employ to support their students' academic development.

The degree to which schools support the development of stable student-adult relationships is assessed primarily through anecdotal evidence at all three levels of schooling. The school employees who interact most with Spanish-speaking immigrant students better understand how well such students work with and trust adults in the school. Available data regarding teacher turnover in the school informs whether any difficulties in forming stable relationships may be a result of the school's turnover rates.

Social network formation is a slightly more difficult indicator to gauge because it was reported based solely on interviewee observations. It also garnered different results for each level of schooling since the nature of friendships in elementary, middle, and high school undergo significant changes as students mature. The stability or reliability of friendships and perceived satisfaction with these friendships help determine whether students' relationships contribute or detract from their self-esteem, self-confidence, and development. Similarly, students' school involvement can illuminate the degree to which they connect with the culture of the school and their peers. School involvement as it pertains to extracurricular involvement was only evaluated at the middle and high school levels since these opportunities are not available in elementary school. Student participation in clubs, sports teams, and other related opportunities for social

interaction were addressed, in addition to whether the school specifically supports these students in their pursuit of extracurricular activities. Across all grade levels, school involvement in terms of class participation was addressed both when students enter school for the first time and as they stay in the system over time.

Stress and isolation is another indicator that, although subjective, is very important for schools to tackle. Besides student achievement, stress and isolation should be one of the easier indicators for schools to address through readily-available services in the school, i.e. guidance counseling, social work, etc. The school may be an institution most equipped to help students confront issues of stress and anxiety, whether school-related or not.

The last indicator, risk of dropout, was only assessed in the context of high school students. It is not until high school that students are permitted by law to drop out. Often, students who run the risk of dropping out have either poor attendance or a record of suspensions and disciplinary action. Both understanding how those factors apply to students at each school and the means a school uses to resolve such problems provide a context for analyzing whether effective prevention practices exist in local high schools.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Data from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and findings from interviews in each of the schools are organized first by indicator, then by school level. For example, student achievement is the first indicator. The section is comprised of student achievement at the elementary school, middle school, and high school levels. Discussion of each indicator identified in the Conceptual Framework follows: development of student-adult relationships, social network formation, school involvement, stress and isolation, and risk of

dropout. The role of the family is an additional indicator that was not discussed in the Conceptual Framework, but resonated with most interviewees as pertinent and valuable. Within each school level, the findings are discussed both in the context of each specific school and across the school level as a whole.

Indicator 1: Student Achievement

Elementary School

School Performance (% of Students Passing) on End-of-Course Tests

<i>Elementary Schools</i>	Reading Overall	Math Overall	Aggregate White	Aggregate Black	Aggregate Hispanic	Aggregate LEP
Y.E. Smith	34.3	55.2	N/A	25.8	34	21.4
E.K. Powe	48.6	60.7	66.7	39	37.1	27.1
District	55	68.6	80.9	41.7	39.9	27.8
State	70.1	81.8	78.7	47	51.5	33.9

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction: School Report Cards.

Y.E. Smith Elementary School

Y.E. Smith Elementary School is considered a Priority School that achieved its expected growth for the past school year. As a Priority School, 50-60% of its students are performing on grade level. The factor of growth is determined using data for the number of students in the school meeting their individual growth standards and college/university preparatory classes compared to the number of students who do not meet their individual growth standards and changes in the school’s dropout rate. If the two values equal zero, the school met expected growth. If the number is positive and greater than 1.50, the school achieved High Growth. If the value is negative, the school did not achieve Expected Growth. For elementary and middle schools, the factor of growth depends primarily on the individual growth of its students; it is not until high school that the course offerings and dropout rate come into play (“The ABCs of Public Education”).

Despite achieving its expected growth, it underperforms to a greater extent than does E.K. Powe. At Y.E. Smith, 34.3% of students who took the reading End of Grade passed, as compared to 55% of those in the district and 70% of those in the state. In math, 55% of students passed these exams, whereas 69% of students in the district and 82% in the state passed. However, each grade at Y.E. Smith demonstrates higher passing percentages, indicating that the school is able to reach out to its students who have failed in the past and help them work back towards the appropriate curriculum for their grade level. The Hispanic population performs proportionally better than the population of black students, but is still six percentage points below the district and seventeen points below the state passing percentages for Hispanic students. 21.4% of LEP students passed their End of Grade tests (NC Department of Public Instruction).

E.K. Powe Elementary School

E.K. Powe Elementary School is also classified as a Priority School, or a school in which fifty to sixty percent of students perform at grade level. However, it did not achieve its expected growth for the past school year. In both reading and math, the school performed eight percentage points below both district and state averages during the 2009-2010 school year. While the Limited English Proficient (LEP) population at the school is not entirely Spanish-speaking, the disparity between passing percentages at E.K. Powe and the district and state levels are less substantial among LEP students than among any of the other demographic subgroups. 27.1% of students classified as LEP passed End-of-Grade tests, compared to 27.8% in the district and 33.9% in the state of North Carolina. Hispanic and LEP students at E.K. Powe perform almost as well as students in the district and state; they seem to be the best performing groups of students in the school (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction).

The Structure of English as a Second Language

E.K. Powe currently employs two full-time ESL teachers. These teachers divide their responsibilities by grade level, including one newcomer class for immigrant students. Where the class has held as many as eleven or thirteen Spanish speakers in the past, the number has dwindled as more students enter school with at least a fundamental understanding of the English language. Despite the lower enrollment in the newcomer class, many students still receive traditional ESL services throughout the school year. ESL at E.K. Powe functions as pull-out academic support; students are “pulled out” of their normal class for a prescribed set of time each day to work with the ESL teacher in a separate classroom.

The Role of Prior Educational Experience

Native Spanish-speakers, regardless of grade level, generally enter the school with lower than average test scores and academic proficiency. There is a steep learning curve when it comes to language acquisition, but once these students immerse themselves fully in the school setting their scores shoot up. Especially for students who already demonstrate fairly developed academic capabilities, the transition into English occurs more rapidly since they have a basis of understanding with which to work. A member of the school staff at E.K. Powe asserted that, “A child who has not had schooling in their own language and cannot read in their own language is not going to have as much academic success.”

In-School Resources

Although two-thirds of students who took End of Grade exams did not pass, E.K. Powe’s responsiveness to student needs has created a fairly comprehensive support system for children and their families. Over the past fifteen years, the school’s ESL program expanded to include two full-time teachers; it began with just one part-time teacher. In addition, the school steadily

expanded the programming and support available to Spanish-speakers. One of the ESL teachers played an instrumental role in developing the school's ESL program over the past twelve years.

Tutoring services are provided to all students in the school, and a large proportion of the ESL program participates. The school also utilizes interpreters, online aides, and resources to facilitate family awareness of school events. Though there is not an interpreter who works exclusively at E.K. Powe, most of the challenges that non-Spanish speakers on staff would typically face in communicating with families are addressed through the provision of paperwork, newsletters, and other information in both English and Spanish. It also benefits from a 21st Century grant, which offers free after-school programming for low-income families. The grant provides both academic support and extracurricular enrichment such as simple cooking classes. If an immigrant student arrives to Durham with enough time before the beginning of the school year, they also have the opportunity to participate in the Stepping Stones program. Operated by the school, it is catered to children who have very little school experience or did not attend pre-kindergarten. In the weeks leading up to the start of school, students can enroll in the program and come to E.K. Powe each day for a few weeks to learn about the school. It prepares children to start the school year understanding the expectations for behavior and school day customs with which they may not be familiar.

Despite the successes of E.K. Powe in providing available support to its Spanish-speaking population, several challenges were noted throughout various interviews. Mobility is a great inhibitor to academic success in the school; one interviewee expressed the importance of stability in school attendance. Once students enroll and regularly attend classes, they tend to do well and make academic progress. However, several immigrant students have left the school to return to their home country. Often, these students are not able to attend school regularly or at

all during their time in their native country. In the instances when these students returned to E.K. Powe, they were not able to advance to their appropriate grade level. For those who are able to settle into the school, interviewees found that students learn basic English skills fairly quickly. An important distinction was also made between the development of social English versus academic English. Despite ESL support, there is often a marked gap between native English speakers and native Spanish speakers with academic language. It is much easier to acquire the academic language with a more complete understanding of the social language.

Though no interviews were conducted at Y.E. Smith, the vast majority of programming supported by the East Durham Children's Initiative focuses on either pre-school aged or elementary school aged students. Many of the available services specifically benefit students at Y.E. Smith. However, Hispanics and students classified as LEP still pass End of Grade tests less frequently than do students at E.K. Powe. Though it is possible that some of the programs operated by the East Durham Children's Initiative have not been implemented for long enough to know their full impact, several differences between the two schools may contribute to this discrepancy. The programs at E.K. Powe developed organically and in response to the demonstrated need of its student population. Many of these programs extend the accountability system outside of the school, inviting parents to get involved and contribute to their children's learning process. The objectives of the East Durham Children's Initiative do the same, which seems to imply that given time and dedication to its newly introduced support mechanisms, the school should see increases in student achievement. However, a key factor in the success of the LEP population at E.K. Powe is the expansion not only of support at the school, but within its ESL program. The stability of its ESL teachers helped them integrate into the mindset of progressive positive reform. In order to achieve this in the East Durham Children's Initiative,

Y.E. Smith may be able to increase the effectiveness of its academic improvement strategies by collaborating specifically with ESL teachers to structure programming towards the particular needs of LEP students.

After-School Resources

A newly implemented program at E.K. Powe, called KidzNote, organizes free music lessons for young students. The school also implemented the Incredible Years program, which includes parent and teaching training, and focuses on the development of students' social skills. It involves parenting classes for mothers and a curriculum for children that improves their understanding of social interactions. The East Durham Children's Initiative created the KidzNote and the Incredible Years programs; both are offered to students at Y.E. Smith as well.

Several community organizations in Durham specifically reach out to the Hispanic population. El Centro Hispano, an organization committed to improving the quality of life for Hispanics in Durham, is a community resource often taken advantage of by Spanish-speaking families. Employees of El Centro Hispano work specifically with elementary school-aged students on literacy skills and reading development. Other local agencies also cater their services to Spanish-speakers through the provision of translators, bilingual materials, etc. Both Y.E. Smith and E.K. Powe run a food pantry for families who may have trouble providing full meals over the weekend. The food pantry at Y.E. Smith comprises a piece of the East Durham Children's Initiative support. Overall, after-school resources available for students at the elementary school age encompass both extracurricular needs and academic support. So much development takes place during the time a student is in elementary school that services cater to the many different aspects of intellectual growth.

Preparedness for the Next School Level

Interviewees both acknowledged the difficulties that their fifth graders face upon leaving E.K. Powe and the efforts the school makes to minimize them. When asked whether students are prepared for middle school upon completion of fifth grade, one member of the school staff responded, “They have to be. They’re ready for middle school socially. Academically, some of them really struggle. But a lot of them struggle like regular old American kids do.”

Middle School

School Performance (% of Students Passing) on End-of-Course Tests

<i>Middle Schools</i>	Reading Overall	Math Overall	Aggregate White	Aggregate Black	Aggregate Hispanic	Aggregate LEP
Neal	40.9	56	48.4	32.5	35.8	21.3
Lowe's Grove	39.4	55.9	62.5	32.6	34.1	13.6
District	55	68.6	80.9	41.7	39.9	27.8
State	70.1	81.8	78.7	47	51.5	33.9

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction: School Report Cards.

Neal Middle School (East Durham Children’s Initiative School)

Neal Middle School is considered a Priority School (50-60% of students performing on grade level) which achieved its expected growth in the past academic year. In the context of both the district and the state, Neal performs below the majority of all middle schools; at least sixty percent of students are performing at their respective grade level in more than half of the middle schools in the district. The school has lower End-of-Grade passing percentages than district and state averages as well: aggregate reading scores, at 40.9%, fall fourteen points below the district average and thirty points below the state average. Math scores are comparably low at 56.0%, roughly fourteen points below the district and twenty five points below the state. Both Hispanic and LEP students demonstrate below-average passing rates, but other subgroups at the school struggle even more to pass these tests. Where four percent fewer students at Neal passed than did in the district total, 48.4% of white students at Neal passed in comparison to 80.9% of

students in Durham. LEP students, with a passing rate of 21.3%, fall seven points below the district passing rate of 27.8% and thirteen points below the state passing rate of 33.9. This performance is confirmed by interviewees who consistently asserted that in comparison to other students, Hispanic students were able to perform at or near grade level.

Lowe's Grove Middle School

Lowe's Grove Middle School is classified as Low Performing School in which Expected Growth was not achieved during the past school year. In a Low Performing School, less than 50% of its students are considered at grade level by national standards. In terms of overall achievement, 39.4% of students passed End-of-Grade tests in Reading, and 55.9% did so in Math. This compares with 55.0% passing rate for Reading and 68.6% for Math in the district, and state passing rates of 70.1% and 81.8% respectively. These test scores indicate that Lowe's Grove has a great deal of room for improvement. In particular, student passing scores decline as students move from sixth to seventh to eighth grade. This could indicate several different trends, such as student grade promotion without demonstrated curriculum mastery, or students who enter the school behind grade level and struggle progressively more to catch up over time. One interviewee noted that the transition to English from Spanish presents a difficult challenge for students with content knowledge on grade level. It was also indicated that students will often come into the school on grade level, then fall behind over time as concepts become more intricate and complex if their capacity for the English language does not expand accordingly.

The school produces low passing rates across all demographic groups. 34.1% of Hispanic students passed End-of-Grade tests, a number that falls approximately eighteen points below the state average passing rate. White and black students passed with respective rates of 62.5% and 32.6%, which fall roughly fifteen points below the state passing rates. Limited

English Proficient students passed tests at a rate of 13.6%, compared to 27.8% passing in the district and 33.9% passing in the state. Overall, Lowe's Grove is a school wholly underperforming; it demonstrates low passing rates among all classifications of students.

The Structure of English as a Second Language

ESL at the middle school level in Durham Public Schools functions as a substitute Language Arts class. Students are pulled out of their mainstream classes in order to receive ESL services. ESL teachers cater the standard curriculum to the language abilities of ESL students while developing their English skills through both pull-out teaching and co-teaching. Co-taught classes are a transitional measure for students who no longer require ESL for Language Arts but may not be completely ready for a normal classroom. Once a student is prepared for a mainstream classroom, they exit the ESL program.

Most of the LEP students at Neal have lived in the country and attended the school long enough to be fairly proficient in English. However, many students are reported as performing poorly. Interviewees at Neal identify the development of academic language as a key hindrance in these students' progress, as well as the fact that much of the school is classified as low-income. While the low income status does not indicate students' intellectual capabilities, numerous factors related to their socioeconomic status disadvantage their likelihood of success, including fewer resources outside of the school and likely lower education levels of parents.

The Role of Prior Educational Experience

For immigrant students, the level of academic competency they demonstrate upon enrollment at both Lowe's Grove and Neal is often dependent upon their prior educational experiences. For Spanish speakers who hail from Europe and the southernmost part of South America – countries such as Spain, Argentina, and Chile – they are able to adjust to the

educational expectations of the United States much more easily. The overall level of education is much higher in such countries, often resulting in fewer problems with school adjustment. Many of these students understand the curriculum content at Neal, so the greatest inhibitor to their success is overcoming the language barrier. Immigrant students from urban areas in these countries are more likely to have attended a private or bilingual school that prepared them more fully for the transition to the American school system. The students from rural areas or refugee situations usually have little grasp on the English language when they arrive. Students from Mexico, Central America, and the northern part of South America exhibit much lower educational attainment. These are also the students who migrate to the United States most frequently. Interviewees reported that the students whose families migrate to the United States in order to make a better life for themselves often face the greatest obstacles to success. It is specifically this population of immigrants who are relatively unskilled and oftentimes do not have mastery of their own language. The students, who have experienced interrupted or inconsistent schooling, have much more room for improvement. It is also possible that students have low levels of literacy and comprehension in their native language, which can compound difficulties in acquiring English. For these students, school staff noted that without any background knowledge to pull from, it is difficult to relate academic concepts to a student's life in a way he or she can understand. Since many of these students are not in the habit of attending school regularly, it is a much greater challenge to make them work efficiently when they are placed in a consistent school setting. If the student arrives in sixth grade, it is much easier to see the growth he or she makes as she develops English skills. However, if a student does not come into the United States until seventh or eighth grade, language acquisition can take more time and effort. The amount of English comprehension a student possesses when they arrive at school is a

large determinant in how likely they are to close the language gap. An interviewee corroborated this likelihood for immigrant students as such:

“It’s devastating to think that they will never catch up, that no matter how long they stay, not only in school but also in the country, they will never be prepared. It’s a cultural thing – it’s not just language proficiency. When you come from a place where education is not important at all, in three years you cannot teach a child the importance of education.”

Mobility also contributes to the academic challenges Neal Middle School faces in catering to its students’ needs. Because many parents move based on job availability, their children switch schools whenever those moves place them in a new zoning area. The interruption in a student’s school life, especially after normalcy is achieved post-transition, has the potential to disrupt students’ learning patterns and development. Similar to interrupted education in their home country, the inconsistency in the United States makes academic development more difficult. One interviewee at Neal expressed the enormity of the challenge for both students and teachers: “To get them to eighth grade is a really daunting task. It’s a nice goal, but it’s very difficult to get to and it’s a very high expectation.”

In-School Resources

Lowe’s Grove uses a tracker to ensure that its students are accounted for in various aspects of their performance at school. This tracker helps staff determine behaviors that warrant intervention and teacher involvement if necessary. One of the key components of such a tracking system is a student’s progress report. For newly arrived students who have transferred from another school in the United States, the school receives academic records from previous schools. Sometimes a student entering the United States for the first time brings his or her grades. Depending on the length of time a student has attended Lowe’s Grove, progress reports, report cards, and other factors from the school’s records may be utilized in tracking a student’s

performance. If necessary, teachers make home visits in order to assure that families understand the challenges their children confront in school. Prior to such visits, ESL teachers regularly communicate with subject teachers to ensure that any important information is relayed to his or her parents. Overall, interviewees felt confident in the school's ability to monitor students' progress effectively.

ESL teachers at Neal make a concerted effort to communicate with the families of their students. As indicated by other schools, the staff does as much as they can, but know that in some instances it is not enough to ensure that their students will succeed. However, the school staff is confident that if all students came to school with the belief that success is possible, all kids would be able to succeed. In addition to ESL, Neal Middle School employs a Math Interventionist who is able to work with students on very specific skills and strategies for improvement. Students who need supplemental work take math intervention as an elective. Though not a component of support resulting from the school's connection to the EDCI, the position of math interventionist only exists at Neal. Select teachers also give up a planning period in order to do remediation work with struggling students. These resources serve as review sessions and opportunities for more focused help on homework and other assignments.

For non-native English speakers, the ESL program is the most important intervention available for student achievement. Lowe's Grove also emphasizes differentiated teaching. Differentiated teaching is a method in which teachers relay the same material to all students, but will do so in different ways depending on a student's attainment level. It was described by one interviewee as teaching "on their level," so as not to overwhelm a student with information they cannot process or understand. This takes place in all subjects, but is particularly useful in non-Language Arts classes since, in the words of one member of the school staff, "There is not

necessarily time to be a [subject teacher] and an English teacher.” Though this means that students often work with a lower percentage of the academic content, they are also able to participate more actively in an inclusive classroom environment. It is common for teachers at Lowe’s Grove Middle School to pair English Language Learners with students who have a better command of the language as a peer tutor.

The books and materials for ESL courses provide a breadth of support for teachers at Neal, including five academic instruction levels with natural transitions from one to the next. These resources help teachers address learning difficulties proactively by including translations and advice on which types of mistakes are likely to be made by students from particular parts of the world. Since the East Durham Children’s Initiative focuses on academic resources at the elementary school level more than middle or high school, the school’s satisfaction with the resources they receive from the school help to promote and support student learning without the same expansive programming that is available from the EDCI for elementary schoolers. In addition, the ability of ESL teachers to work with smaller groups of students gives students access to teachers when they are truly struggling and need more focused attention. Lowe’s Grove uses computer programs with a specific curriculum to supplement basic skills; members of the school staff at Neal commented that greater access to computers would be helpful for ESL students. These programs are supervised by teachers. Another important in-school intervention, referred to as “double dose”, is available at both schools for reading or math. Students who need extra help in either subject opt out of an extracurricular elective and receive additional practice during their prescribed elective period. Academic enrichment for reading is often provided for students who are more advanced, but not completely fluent in English. One-on-one tutoring at

various times throughout the day also creates an opportunity for struggling students to receive more attention from ESL teachers.

After-School Resources

Lowe's Grove and Neal both take advantage of after-school programs. Lowe's Grove benefits from a unique program that only serves four schools throughout the state. Called Citizen Schools, it operates at Lowe's Grove after the school day has ended. Forty-five students participate in the program. Conducted by recent college graduates, Citizen Schools provides both academic enrichment and extracurricular activities for its students. School staff encourages students to sign up for these programs in an effort to practice their English regularly and receive homework help. Outside of the school, students get very involved with their churches. Immigrant students tend to have a very strong connection to the religious base in the community. The nearby Summit Church supplies a great deal of community engagement through academic enrichment and home visits.

Durham Public Schools provides support to Neal through its Encore! after-school program and individual tutoring. The program also employs writing electives, inclusion classes, and school-wide academic enrichment. The East Durham Children's Initiative organizes a literacy project that solicits the participation of community members in an attempt to unite students and adults through reading. Students often come to their ESL class with homework and assignments from other classrooms; ESL teachers help students with this work as well. Counseling services are being implemented to help not only students, but families. Though the school offers its after-school programs to its entire student population, they are utilized by a large proportion of ESL students.

Preparedness for the Next School Level

School staff reported mixed opinions regarding their students' preparedness for high school upon completion of eighth grade. One interviewee from Neal said that most students are not ready for high school, but that there are few drastic changes that can be made for newly arrived immigrants. Despite these difficulties, staff feels supported by both the school and the county for any needs that may arise during the course of the school year.

One interviewee at Lowe's Grove asserted that it is nearly impossible for a student to come into the school speaking a language that is not English and be ready for the high school curriculum from one year to the next; language acquisition takes more time than afforded to students before moving to the next grade or school level. Some of the school's greatest successes with ESL students have been sixth graders who come into the school with a lot of motivation to succeed. These students, with enough incentive and support, make the necessary progress to become academically proficient by the time they enter high school. A member of the school staff at Neal suggested the idea that students who are not ready for high school usually do not have the right attitude towards school; it is not their capacity for learning that inhibits them, but their own perceptions about school. In order for the school to influence more success for all ESL students, one interviewee remarked that, "we need a school that is willing to support immigrant kids."

Sometimes, the best thing for a student's academic achievement is being retained for a year in order to master the material and prepare for the progression that awaits them as they continue to the high school. As expressed by one interviewee, "A lot of smart kids are college material if they have time. A key factor is the time piece. They go through middle school and then go through high school and don't have a place to stop

and say, ‘I’m here, but it might take an extra year or two to get me where I need to be.’” They have so much ground to cover that one or two years is not sufficient to overcome the language barrier. However, students cannot be retained solely due to language needs. This results in students passing grades without adequate language skills. Most schools view grade retention as a strongly negative academic practice, but for students who enter school below grade level, such practices may be greatly beneficial in the long run.

School staff at Lowe’s Grove also takes it upon themselves to make students more aware of their options both during middle school and beyond. The school conducts a segment on high school transition and career in an attempt to inform eighth graders of the classes, tests, and requirements they may encounter. For many students, focus in high school is a key to success. Larger classes without the same level of adult supervision leads to a lot of hurdles students must overcome without the same amount of support; students are much more likely to “get lost” in high school.

For immigrant students who are at a middle school achievement level but are too old to attend middle school, Durham Public Schools offers an alternative schooling option that several native Spanish speakers from Neal have utilized as it has become available. The Holton Academy allows students to complete their high school degree in conjunction with job and career training. A student who “wants to be a professional and do something great with their life, they could go to Holton, finish high school, and also have a fallback.” However, Holton Academy does not offer any sort of ESL services. For this reason, many students struggle in Language Arts, but “are making a tremendous effort.”

High School

School Performance (% of Students Passing) on End-of-Course Tests

<i>High Schools</i>	English I	Algebra I	Algebra II	Geometry	Biology	Physical Science	Civics & Econ.	US History
Southern	56.7	39.9	24.6	36.3	46.1	47.4	38.6	41.8
Jordan	78.6	46.1	76.9	63.6	77.6	56.1	80.9	90
District	71.3	59.2	70.8	63.1	71	51.4	66.8	76.1
State	82.4	77.8	84.9	82.3	81.2	76.4	78.7	81.6

<i>High Schools</i>	Aggregate White	Aggregate Black	Aggregate Hispanic	Aggregate LEP
Southern	63.6	38.7	46.5	40.1
Jordan	94.1	62.9	54.5	40.1
District	90	58.4	58.5	44
State	88.5	67	74.1	55.8

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction: School Report Cards.

Southern High School (East Durham Children’s Initiative School)

Southern High School is classified as a Priority School achieving expected growth for the past school year. Since high school students take End-of-Grade tests in particular academic subject areas, passing percentages are available based on subject rather than grade or school aggregation. Across all subject areas, Southern underperforms when compared to both the district and the state. Subject comparisons available from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction are English I, Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Biology, Physical Science, Civics and Economics, and U.S. History. Compared to district scores, Southern is closest to the average in Physical Science, where it falls four percentage points below the Durham Public Schools average. The school is furthest behind in Algebra II, where only 24.6% of students at Southern passed the End-of-Grade test. The district passing rate was 70.8%. Algebra II was also the subject in which Southern fell furthest behind the state: 84.9% of all students in North Carolina who took the test passed. The closest margin between Southern High and North Carolina as a whole was 25.7 percentage points in English I. These wide discrepancies indicate

that even though the school achieved its expected growth last year, there is still a wide margin for improvement in coming years.

Jordan High School

C.E. Jordan High School is classified as a School of Progress, or a school in which at least sixty percent of students perform on grade level. It also achieved High Growth in the past school year. Though the school's End-of-Grade (EOG) test passing rates are below the averages of the state in most subjects, the only subject in which students at Jordan performed below the district average was in Algebra I. Otherwise, the school performs above the district average. Civics & Economics and US History seem to be strong subjects for the school; a higher percentage of students at Jordan passed the End-of-Grade tests in those subjects than the average for the district or the state.

Compared to all other schools in which interviews were conducted, Jordan has, on average, the highest performing students. White and black students performed above the district average and white students performed above the state when compared to their respective demographic groups. However, Hispanic students are the one demographic group that fails to match the state average. 54.5% of Hispanic students passed their End-of-Grade tests at Jordan, versus 58.5% in the district and 74.1 in the state. Limited English Proficient students are also slightly underperforming – 40.1% of LEP students passed their EOGs, while 44.0% in the district and 55.8% in the state did so.

The Structure of English as a Second Language

The English as a Second Language program in high school for Durham Public Schools provides ESL classes in conjunction with sheltered content classes for English Language Learners. Sheltered content classes, taught by normal classroom teachers, are comprised of ESL

students. The curriculum in sheltered core classes is the same as in a standard class, but adapted to the language abilities of the students enrolled. Rather than take a science or social studies course with native English speakers, a sheltered content course allows LEP students to take courses of the standard curriculum with students of the same language ability. ESL classes may be offered in levels based on the needs of the student population and the sheltered content classes are taught by teachers who receive special training to work with ESL students. English Language Learners attend such classes until they are prepared to move into a mainstream classroom.

At Jordan, several levels of ESL classes are available based on a student's comprehension of English and academic background. These courses range from Novice-Low for absolute beginners, followed by Novice-High, Intermediate-Low, and Intermediate-High. Students usually progress quickly from the Novice to the Intermediate level, but often require extra semesters in the Intermediate courses before transitioning out of regular ESL classes. Advanced reading and writing, considered transitional support, are available for students who have lived in the United States for long enough to know English conversationally but aren't as prepared for academic English.

In order to establish a student's background history before being placed in an ESL classroom, students are evaluated at the English as a Second Language regulation center. This provides a baseline by which all students can be assessed and provided services based on their needs. Students with the greatest need will stay in sheltered content and ESL classes for the entire school day, without any classroom interaction with students in mainstream classes. Students receiving ESL services have generally been in the United States for five years or less.

Students who have exited the ESL program at Jordan are still monitored by ESL teachers to confirm that the student is capable of handling the material they are asked to master. In addition, a student may qualify to receive testing modifications such as extra time or access to a dictionary or electronic translator. However, students who are considered LEP but don't need any kind of special services often flounder in mainstream classes but do not have the same web of support.

Southern High School does not offer quite the range of courses for LEP students as Jordan. ESL teachers at Southern work with several different classes of students in the middle range of English comprehension – those who have enough comprehension to be considered socially proficient but still struggle with the academic language. In addition to these different classes, Southern also offers intensive ESL for students who just arrived to the country and need to develop basic English skills before studying literature and grammar. Southern also supports immigrants who have been in the United States for most of their life but still need reading or vocabulary support. These students do not attend ESL classes; they only interact with the ESL program through this supplemental elective program.

The Role of Prior Educational Experience

For newly arrived immigrant students, the courses to which they are assigned often demand a greater level of English proficiency than they possess. The discrepancy in language skills plays a major factor in determining immigrant students' success in high school particularly; these students have much less time to achieve academic proficiency. Intensive ESL is an option, but it is no guarantee for students who have limited literacy in their native language.

If two students enroll at Jordan with the same level of English comprehension but different education backgrounds, one interviewee reported that their discrepancies in education

usually dictate how quickly students acquire English language skills. Several members of the school staff at Jordan expressed that students coming from rural areas who may have deficits in their native language also demonstrate low achievement in math when they begin school.

At Southern, teachers prefer to hold a student back to give them an additional year to master the subject matter before being tested and promoted to more advanced material. One interviewee found that students who are retained for a year often perform extraordinarily well the second time around; repeating the year allows students to get a handle on the academic expectations for the class and the language before having to master the content.

In-School Resources

At Jordan, the National Honor Society provides peer tutoring. Many teachers, including nearly all sheltered content teachers, offer additional help after school. In the past, Jordan offered Saturday Academy for weekend enrichment, but was not able to do so this year due to budget constraints. Service learning tutoring from nearby universities is also utilized at Jordan in order to provide more one-on-one supplemental help for ESL students. Freshman at Jordan attend a school-specific program called Freshman Academy to address challenges first-time ninth graders may deal with during the academic transition to high school. Freshman Academy assigns groups of students to a team of teachers and one guidance counselor who are responsible for teaching and mentoring the students under their care. They also participate in a course called Freshman Focus during the first semester of the year that develops skills such as team work, public speaking, critical thinking skills, and self-reflection. The Freshman Academy program prescribes a specific structure to a student's freshman year in order to combat the high school's rising freshman retention rate. Overall, the school's resources for students seem to promote high

student achievement; however, the LEP population struggles to translate these services into higher academic performance.

In order to provide ESL students access to normal curriculum instruction from standard classroom teachers, a teacher in each subject area at both Southern and Jordan volunteers to teach a sheltered ESL version of their class. Students receiving ESL services are enrolled in this class and are able to work with a subject teacher who tailors the curriculum to the language abilities of his or her students. The content teachers communicate with ESL teachers to ensure that LEP students receive sufficient support from classroom instruction and supplemental support. If a student needs additional help on his or her work, the school has a particular academic elective that allows a student to receive a “double dose” of the material and exempts him or her from taking the End-of-Grade test.

Teachers at both schools provide tutoring for their students if they need more time to work on assignments than allotted during normal class time. In addition, several teachers let classmates explain concepts to new students in Spanish to enforce understanding. One interviewee commented, “I’m more concerned about a student understanding the content than whether it’s in English or in Spanish.”

A unique challenge presented at Jordan is that of course selection. The school does not use tracking to segregate students, but immigrant students may choose to enroll in standard track courses instead of honors or AP classes for two distinct reasons. The first is that many students, despite the ability to handle honors or AP level coursework, do not understand the value of taking such courses in the pursuit of higher quality education. Secondly, students whose parents do not understand the system might choose a standard track in order to minimize the amount of

work he or she needs to complete; their parents do not know the difference and therefore do not protest the decision.

After-School Resources

The Holton Career Center serves as an alternative high school for students who are too old to continue their education at Jordan or Southern. Students also have access to the English Language Institute and the Gateway Program at Durham Technical Community College. El Centro Hispano organizes a program called Jóvenes Líderes en Acción, or Youth Leaders in Action. Community colleges in North Carolina recently opened their doors to undocumented students at the out-of-state tuition price. Many of these options may serve as alternatives to high school or offer courses which high school students can take regardless of which school they attend in the district. Southern also supports students with a 21st Century Learning program, which provides a grant for students to stay after school for tutoring and then get bused home afterward.

Preparedness for the Next School Level

The amalgamation of successes and failures, challenges overcome, constraints faced, and pressures a high school student internalizes play into his or her decision to pursue higher education. Whether a traditional college or university or vocational schooling, the choice to apply to and follow through with this decision requires both academic readiness and determination. On the other hand, the same influences may lead a student to drop out before graduating. Given this low academic attainment of Hispanic and LEP students at both Jordan and Southern, especially in comparison to other demographic groups, warrants attention and intervention. The East Durham Children's Initiative's goal for early intervention translates into fewer resources available at the high school level despite the present need for more intervention

services. Since risk of dropout is one of the final indicators for schools to address, preparedness for college and likelihood of attending college will be included in discussion related to a student's risk of dropout.

Indicator 2: Student-Adult Relationships

Elementary School

E.K. Powe makes the cultivation of its student-adult network a high priority. It folds into the school's philosophy which emphasizes individual growth for each of its students. From the perspective of non-ESL teachers at E.K. Powe, the ESL teachers are extremely respectful and considerate of the students with whom they work. They focus on more than just academic achievement in order to help develop well-rounded students. Both the ESL teachers and other members of the staff attempt to facilitate the transition to school for immigrant children. In addition to two ESL teachers who are functionally proficient in Spanish, E.K. Powe benefits from several classroom teachers who speak the language. Several interviewees asserted that for both children and parents who speak little English, there is always someone in the school who is able and willing to help them.

A low rate of teacher turnover at E.K. Powe allows parents to develop relationships not only with ESL teachers, but with school staff such as secretaries and administrators. These relationships foster an atmosphere of openness and comfort. Since the staff expresses overwhelming satisfaction with the culture of the school for employees, teachers are able to establish their classroom practices and policies with relative ease. Strong leadership in the school's administration also contributes to a positive attitude that trickles down to the staff.

Middle School

Native Spanish speakers tend to rely on the adults in the school whom they know speak Spanish, particularly ESL teachers. The bilingual guidance counselor at Lowe's Grove serves as an importance resource for adult contact within the school. The English as a Second Language teachers divide their responsibilities by grade level; students are likely to go to their respective ESL teacher in the event of social or academic problems that they want to talk to someone about. An interviewee from Neal expressed the conflicting emotions in this dependency: "They [students] are very willing and always looking for an adult to talk to and to trust their problems... It feels good when they find it in you but it can also be overwhelming. It's a big responsibility."

Interviewees understand the gravity of their role as mentors to immigrant students. They have the unique ability to connect with students through language in a way that many other members of a school's staff cannot. This responsibility, while incredibly valuable and important, also comes with a great deal of risk. Immigrant students are at high priority for academic growth; without the support of teachers and school staff, it is easy to be left behind. This places a great deal of pressure on those employees who interact most frequently with such students. School staff at both Lowe's Grove and Neal expressed the gravity of their role as mentors: they have the ability to instill hope and determination in students despite the challenges they may face on a daily basis. One interviewee commented on the importance of giving students a picture of reality that they might not be able to conjure themselves:

"It comes down to showing the kids that you really and truly care about them. That you love them. That they don't need to go and do something stupid. That their life doesn't have to end tomorrow, and probably will not end tomorrow. And they have to prepare, prepare for their future. And the best way to do that is with an education."

Over the past year, Lowe's Grove had a teacher turnover rate of 25% as reported by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. However, interviewees report that the rate of teacher turnover may affect younger students, but the greater autonomy and independence of middle school students leads to less of a reliance on teachers. At the middle school level, teachers may be considered more of a "plug-in." This holds particularly true for ESL teachers. At the elementary school level, it is likely that ESL teachers work with students for the entirety of their time at the school. The stability of one exclusive ESL teacher for six years will prove much more beneficial than a new teacher cycling through each year. But in middle school, students often work with two different teachers in a three year-period. As long as someone fills the position and can provide support, the normalcy of a familiar face plays a much less significant role in a student's achievement.

Despite the limited impact of teacher turnover on the quality of student-teacher relationships, the structure and stability an experienced teacher contributes to the school may play a role in academic consistency. Both schools commented on the presence of new teachers in their schools, though it was enumerated to a greater degree at Neal. New teachers bring enthusiasm and energy to the school environment, but there is also a great deal of learning that goes on for teachers as they establish themselves in the first two or three years of teaching. This learning process, while unavoidable, is less than ideal for students in need of a teacher who exudes confidence and reliability. However, breaking in new teachers who will be effective in the long run is a cost worth incurring. Rather than keep an established teacher who does not educate his or her students well, hiring a new teacher results in higher-quality educators for the school in the long run.

Both Lowe's Grove and Neal used to experience much higher rates of teacher turnover than they do currently. In order to address this difficulty, both schools adjusted administrative policies – Lowe's Grove hired a new principal and turned over the majority of its staff while Neal tightened its school security and discipline practices. As a result, both schools experience more stability within the school, improving the overall atmosphere and encouraging teachers to remain at the school for longer. An interviewee at Lowe's Grove admitted that they are still far from where they need to be. However, there is a feeling among staff that the school is making important changes that will help it reach higher achievement among its students in the near future.

Although Neal Middle School deals with some degree of teacher turnover, the amount of student turnover proves to be a much more challenging situation to handle. No matter how prepared the teachers feel to work with their students, a student population in flux may not be able to benefit from the efforts made by teachers. Unless the student population exhibits more permanency, there is only so much even the most effective teachers can help his or her students achieve.

High School

“Newcomers tend to connect with the ESL teachers, who look out for them. ESL teachers are a huge ally and advocate.” In general, immigrant students gravitate towards teachers who speak Spanish because they want to use their native language when discussing serious issues or concerns. An interviewee at Southern commented that many immigrant students feel isolated, so the availability of a mentor and confidante can be an instrumental means of support. While the importance of expressing personal sentiments is a valuable skill for Spanish-speaking staff to share with immigrant students, it is also difficult to strike a balance between providing

them adequate support and perpetuating a dependence on ESL teachers. There are also many non-Spanish speaking teachers and staff who care a great deal about ESL students and would love to help them if given the opportunity. Many of these members of the staff reach out to Spanish speaking students in spite of the language barrier. Students who have been in the United States for longer periods of time tend to develop better relationships with staff who speak little or no Spanish. Established Hispanic students don't have the ESL connection for support; it is these students who often have trouble finding an adult to turn to when they need it. Jordan employs a larger number of staff with proficiency in Spanish than does Southern; newcomers at Jordan have the support of a larger staff with whom they can comfortably communicate.

“I think we do a good job meeting the needs of the students we serve. We really care about the kids, and we really care about seeing them graduate.” More than the core content of the subjects required in school, one interviewee expressed satisfaction with the school's ability to instill in its students some life skills and basic English. Forging individual relationships with students both instills a sense of security and connectedness in students, and a sense of purpose in the adults on whom they depend.

Teacher turnover seems to play a larger role in students' attitudes in high school than in middle school. According to one member of the school's staff, Southern High School's teacher turnover rate of 16% definitely impacts its students. When students get used to seeing a teacher, it requires an adjustment when they know the teacher has moved elsewhere. Though the movement of teachers into and out of the school may not play as large a role on students' attitudes towards school as other factors, it is definitely something that students are aware of and affected by. An interviewee commented that, “The stability is super, super important and I've heard kids talk about how it's hard for them.” Jordan had a slightly lower rate of teacher

turnover at 14%, but interviewees did not express any major concerns with the ESL population regarding teacher turnover. One member of the school staff reported that ESL teachers are more stable than other teachers, so LEP students receiving services from the English as a Second Language program may have less of a problem dealing with turnover than others in the school.

Indicator 3: Social Network Formation

Elementary School

Some native Spanish-speakers were described as skittish or timid when they first begin school. However, multiple interviewees were secure in the belief that the school's practice of acceptance and appreciation of different cultures allows quiet students to settle in and become more confident: "everyone pretty much loves everyone. It doesn't matter the color of your skin or your hair." While most students adjust fairly well, some students require more time and attention. As expressed by an interviewee, "A kid who's more timid and shy is not going to learn as fast or do as well academically. "

Because language development can inhibit social adjustment, many teachers and staff at E.K. Powe make it a priority to communicate with students who struggle with the English language. In order to ensure that students are able to seek out peer support during the school day, native Spanish-speakers are often assigned to a classroom with another native Spanish-speaker who has been in the school for longer. This kind of peer mentoring accelerates the adjustment process and minimizes new students' fear or nervousness in the classroom. As time goes on and students acquire more English, they generally become better friends with a greater number of students in their class.

The utilization of tutors can also contribute to the development of students' social confidence. Although not all tutors are necessarily trained in the most effective of support

methods, the value of social interaction weighs heavily into the benefits of the child's tutoring experience. One interviewee commented, "I'm not sure about catching them up to other kids, but it [tutoring] builds confidence and they make a new friend and they're motivated to do well and they really want to succeed."

Middle School

Interviewees reported that immigrant students who are entering the school for the first time usually blend into the already existing group of Latino students present at the school. Social groups at both Neal and Lowe's Grove segregate themselves by ethnicity. Most of the white students stick together, as do black students and Hispanics. Many of the Spanish-speaking students at Neal also gravitate towards students who live in their neighborhood. These students spend more time outside of school together, which often minimizes the amount of time it takes to integrate into the social structure of the school. One interviewee commented that students usually "adjust to American culture very fast. To school, not so much." The cultural or social component of transition within the school is easier than the academic adjustment. As students' English competency increases, so does the chance that they move outside of the Latino population in terms of social interactions and friendship development. According to one member of the school staff at Lowe's Grove, "They blend and assimilate, then they kind of branch out once they get acclimated, acculturated, and more comfortable with the language and culture." The group of Hispanic students seems clique-ish at times, but once a bond is established among students, they also feel more comfortable fanning out towards other children. The extent to which groups interact often occurs when students of different ethnicities date. Fortunately, the social segregation present at both schools presents little tension. Though very occasional fights occur, such outbreaks are rare.

A negative effect of social networks is gang involvement. One interviewee reported that the sense of belonging afforded to youth by a gang often serves as an outlet for the numerous frustrations these students may face. Students may feel that they don't belong anywhere. Despite the availability and security of a group of friends, immigrant students struggle with how to identify themselves. If a student is struggling with academics, language development, their own family situations, or any combination thereof, the appeal of a gang may outweigh the challenges they face otherwise. Hispanic students, who tend to be smaller in size and have more trouble with English, are more likely to be mocked or bullied. These frustrations may cause students to seek out the security and protection of gangs, which recruit heavily in the seventh and eighth grade. Schools attempt to be as vigilant as possible in keeping gang activity out of schools and deterring students from joining, but the jurisdiction of the school staff stops at the end of the school day. Without any influence over what happens outside of school, interviewees expressed frustration at the limits on their abilities to help students fight this pressure.

High School

Hispanic students stick together as a group as a result of similarities with both language and culture. At Southern, many ESL students spend a great deal of time together during the school day; sheltered immersion classes minimize the amount of contact students may have with their classmates in mainstream courses. As a result, ESL students get to know each other much better than they get to know non-ESL students. This isolation may hinder students' language development. If students speak Spanish with one another and only use English when necessary in the classroom, they do not master the language as quickly as students who are forced to use English to communicate. For those who use English on a regular basis, a member of the school

staff at Jordan predicted that it is possible to master social English within six months of starting school. Male students are more likely to branch out of their social circle than are females.

According to one interviewee at Southern, “they [immigrant students] don’t socialize or break up too much because they just don’t feel like they’re a part of it [the school culture].”

Members of the school staff at both schools commented that immigrant students tend to feel disconnected. However, most students find a niche somewhere within the social strata of the school, whether good or bad.

“Especially in a foreign environment, that’s your best support... it’s safer to reach out to somebody who speaks English like you do, who makes mistakes like you do, who may have trouble understanding what you’re saying just like you have trouble understanding.”

An exception to these social tendencies occurs when a native English speaker befriends Spanish speakers in order to practice his or her Spanish. These students are able to communicate with native Spanish speakers in an atmosphere with which immigrant students are comfortable. Immigrant students are often receptive in these situations, but might feel uncomfortable in a peer tutoring situation if their tutor doesn’t understand Spanish.

Interviewees at Southern indicated that gang affiliation issues are often a problem. They are a much greater problem for established immigrant students who students faced the pressures of gang recruitment in middle school. However, one interviewee distinguished between students who are affiliated in school and those who are “a hardcore gang member outside of school.” Many students who do not actively participate in gang activities will flout their connection during the school day, while the students who are active members outside of school lay low during school hours. Despite the presence of gang association in the school, members of the school’s staffs agree that gang problems are much more subtle and easier to handle now than in

the past. Gang issues were also communicated as a more prevalent problem at Southern than at Jordan.

Indicator 4: School Involvement

Elementary School

School involvement at the elementary school level takes a different form than at the middle and high school levels. Rather than focus on extra-curricular participation, interviewees discussed the role that immigrant students play in the dynamics of their respective classrooms. Students consistently behave very well quickly upon learning the routines of their classrooms. According to an interviewee, “The just fall right into it [good classroom behavior].” The degree to which immigrant students participate in classroom activities is also more dependent on a student’s personality than the difficulties of adjustment. Just as a native English-speaking child with more outgoing dispositions tends to participate more, an outgoing native Spanish-speaker will take the leap to get involved more quickly if typical of his or her personality.

While ESL caters to English acquisition, it also attempts to respect the process of acculturation for students who have little knowledge of the United States. An interviewee commented that involvement in school allows immigrant students to learn more about the culture of the United States in a sheltered setting. “It’s good for them to be involved in more American stuff because it gets them acclimated to what’s going on.”

Middle School

Though athletics are the most popular avenue for extracurricular participation at both Lowe’s Grove and Neal, school staff at Neal described the nature of involvement for native Spanish speakers in a much more negative light. They reported that social pressures in middle school seem to deter native Spanish-speakers from actively taking part in the extracurricular

activities offered by the middle school. One member of the school staff commented that, “native Spanish-speakers don’t get involved much. Hispanic kids tend to think that everyone else is separating them; they don’t tend to see that they are separating themselves.” With the exception of soccer, students don’t participate even when invited. They distinguish sport by race or other characteristics that “disqualify” them from participating. The boys express enthusiasm and dedication to soccer, but rarely branch out to other sports or extra-curricular activities.

Lowe’s Grove, on the other hand, presented their immigrant students’ extracurricular involvement as a test of their confidence with the English language. At Lowe’s Grove, immigrant students and other native Spanish-speakers are most likely to go out for the soccer and volleyball teams – soccer for the boys and volleyball for the girls. The degree to which they are comfortable with their English determines whether or not they are willing to go out for other sports. Until a student decides they are ready to move outside their comfort zone, interviewees report that immigrant students won’t venture outside of what they know. The soccer teams at Lowe’s Grove were a great success, despite this being the first year the sport was offered to students.

Interviewees at both middle schools connected the students’ passion for soccer to the sport’s ability to promote positive academic performance. In order to be on the team, players must be doing well in class. According to a member of the school staff at Lowe’s Grove, students “have to have certain grades, can’t be in trouble, and can’t have any behavior reports. It’s all about discipline and good behavior and sportsmanship.” It is a powerful incentive for the students who may prefer not to exert themselves in school but want to be on the team. The draw to athletics serves as an easier avenue through which to motivate the boys; female students have less of an inclination to find an activity to which they want to commit their time. Though the

consistency of participation in soccer provides an outlet for male students, the female students rarely involve themselves outside of their social circles. According to one interviewee at Neal, “If it’s dancing or boys, these girls are all over it. As far as sports, I don’t think they’re interested.” They commonly associate sports and activities with groups of students of which they are not a part, effectively excluding themselves.

In terms of classroom involvement, the level of student participation is often affected most by personality. Kids who are more outgoing are more likely to get engaged because they want to show a teacher what they know. However, students with limited English-speaking abilities frequently melt into the background of the classroom and need to be drawn out more by teachers and peers in order to increase classroom participation. Recently arrived immigrants also tend to be more focused on the task at hand and less likely to get distracted.

The social phenomenon of labeling is a foreign one to many immigrant students. When a student enters the social environment of the school and begins to understand the concept of labeling, it is likely that immigrant students will separate themselves based on their label. They may succumb to how they are perceived by classmates, whereas American students may recognize a label but feel less defined or limited by it.

Students also have trouble taking advantage of school programming as a result of transportation difficulties. If a student has no mode of transportation besides the bus, it is difficult for them to participate in the available clubs, athletic teams, or other after-school activities. Students who may be interested in getting involved may not be able to due to obstacles outside of their control. Members of the staff at Neal expressed this challenge; those at Lowe’s Grove did not.

High School

Both high schools have attempted to start culture clubs with a hope for high Latino student involvement. El Sabor Latino at Jordan provides an avenue for Latino/a student leadership; however, the organization usually does not make it through the school year due to a lack of student initiative. An interviewee commented that ESL students often require more motivating in order to get them engaged and willing to do extra work for such clubs to flourish. In the past, members of school staff attempted to put on an International Club at Southern with little success. The first year of the program was predominantly attended by Hispanic students, but those students attended less and less as more African American students started participating in the club's second year. The staff considers student investment in the school a weak area for immigrant students and native Spanish speakers; most students attend school but go home directly afterwards.

One member of the school staff at Southern noted that, "It's apparent that they [Hispanic students] don't feel like they're a part of the school." Despite encouragement from different teachers and administrators, immigrant students and non-native English speakers still hesitate to get involved with athletic teams or extracurricular activities. Students generally love to play soccer, but choose not to go out for the team. There is one Hispanic boy on the football team, and a few boys and girls on the soccer teams, but Hispanic students were otherwise described as "not super involved."

Soccer is by far the most popular among Spanish speaking students at both schools. However, not all students are capable of making the commitment to a formal athletic team. Some boys want to be on the team, but do not understand the rules about trying out and attending practice regularly. Some students at Southern choose not to go out for the team. Despite the

students' affinity for sports, there seems to be a disconnect between their interest and whether they take advantage of the opportunity to participate at school. One hypothesis for this disconnect is the separation of school and sports in both Spanish and Latin American culture. Immigrant students may miss this component of American culture, resulting in an underrepresentation of Spanish speakers in school activities. Immigrant students also tend to be slightly older than the typical student; age may keep a student from trying out for sports. It was suggested that intramural sports would be an easier time commitment for many students, but there is no space available for more sports practices and scrimmages. If students have athletic potential, members of the school staff push them to try out for the school's organized team. Other extracurricular activities are not accessible to immigrant students. These activities, such as band, are not an option because students to play an instrument in middle school; unless newly arrived immigrants learned an instrument in their native country, they are unable to join the band as high schoolers.

Transportation is a major factor in students' ability to participate in extracurricular activities. Without a bus that runs later in the evening, many students have no means of transportation; they have to take the bus that leaves at the end of the school day in order to get home. In addition, many students work to help support their family or must take care of younger siblings. These responsibilities to their family take precedence over sports or clubs offered by the school.

Not many native Spanish speakers attend prom at Southern because they don't listen to the same kind of music played at school-sponsored events. More expressly articulated by interviewees at Southern, students feel that the school is "not representative of who [they] are." One interviewee believes that some of this hesitation to get involved is a result of a school

culture more supportive of African American students. Though students learn to navigate the school, they do not feel particularly comfortable and choose not to get involved more than is necessary.

Indicator 5: Stress and Isolation

Elementary School

The staff at E.K. Powe is of the consensus that student stresses are mediated by the numerous practices in place, both in the classroom and outside of it. Overall, students seem to transition rather quickly to the culture of the school. Though the first year may be necessary to help the overall shock of adjustment wear off, the overwhelming contributor to stress and fear for these students, according to one interviewee, is “the translation and the language. We are very sensitive to them as well as the other students because they know that we don’t understand them and sometimes they don’t understand us.” However, several teachers in the school, including the ESL teachers, have at least basic Spanish proficiency. If a student needs to speak in Spanish, E.K. Powe has the resources to communicate those immediate concerns. In order to ease the process of transition, the school also offers a “New to Powe” orientation each month. It has proven particularly useful for students who arrive in the middle of the year and who may have more trouble adjusting quickly.

E.K. Powe’s support system for native Spanish-speakers and recently arrived immigrants developed as the student population grew and presented new needs to the school community. Just fifteen years ago, the Latino population hovered around three percent; today E.K. Powe’s student population is comprised of 35% Hispanics according to a member of the school staff. The teachers’ concern for meeting the needs of the emerging population resulted in the slow but

continual growth of the support structure for non-English speakers. One interviewee summarized her opinion of the school as follows:

“We are considerate and caring about our children, regardless of their culture. We aren’t here just to teach them, because in this day and time, many homes are not child-oriented or parent-responsible. When they’re at school it’s mostly their positive experience... I feel like, at this point, we’re doing the best we can. We can always do better. But we’re doing the best that we can.”

In the event that a school cannot provide adequate support to a newly arrived family, they refer them to the district ESL department. E.K. Powe has a designated contact from Durham Central Office who makes home visits and communicates with students and their families. This takes place when a severe language barrier exists such that even the resources in the school cannot provide adequate facilitation. In most cases, the Central Office ESL Department maintains contact without needing this degree of intervention, but can do so when necessary.

Middle School

Generalized stress that students internalize can manifest itself in many different ways. Often, students respond to anxiety by withdrawing. One member of the school staff at Neal noted that “a commonality among Hispanic students is that they blend into the woodwork instead of acting out. If you have students acting out, you won’t notice that another child needs help.” Students are more likely to be overlooked before the teacher and student create a working relationship. The academic workload and the amount of English they are expected to acquire can be a major contributor to a student’s anxiety regarding school adjustment.

Interviewees emphasized that communication with students about the importance of getting schoolwork done, understanding the effort their parents make for them, and the value of engaging in school today so that they will not struggle tomorrow is one of the more effective

ways to reach out to those who are withdrawn. An interviewee at Neal emphasized the need of school staff to use their own discretion to determine to the best kind of support for students who are struggling. Sometimes a student needs a hug or sometimes they need to hear “a Mom voice” in order to internalize the message they are being sent. The same interviewee noted how much of a difference it can make when adults remind students that they were once in the same position and felt the same way about school, their social lives, and their futures.

The stresses a student faces at school are often compounded by the stresses his or her family deals with at home. A member of the school staff at Neal observed that many immigrant families come to the United States because they do not have money or resources in their home country; their economic situation rarely changes when they arrive here. Parents must search for work and worry about money while their children are faced with an extraordinary amount of material to learn as quickly as possible. The difficulties that parents deal with may trickle down to their children. The increased prevalence of single-parent families requires that a sole mother or father, or in some cases an older sibling or extended relative, to work multiple jobs in order to support his or her children. Due to more time at work, parents cannot always supervise or support their children as much as they would if they were able to work fewer hours. El Futuro, a mental health agency in Durham, provides support to families who are dealing with the numerous challenges that can develop for students and their parents during the process of transition.

Problems in cultural adjustment often come as a result of the abrasiveness of American culture. One interviewee at Neal Middle School emphasized the importance of cultural differences in determining academic success. “The things that they know are so completely different than what we know. It has to be hard, moving from this life to that.” A member of the

school staff at Lowe's Grove commented that the culture of the United States is louder and more challenge-oriented: people are more likely to confront one another or call them out for their ideas. It is often difficult for students who are not used to the language to distinguish jokes from harsh comments, and especially the use of sarcasm. Cultural miscues and the overwhelming change a newly arrived immigrant faces when entering the school may lead a student to shut down. As a whole, classroom teachers are less prepared to work with Limited English Proficient students, which can compound native Spanish speakers' difficulty with content in academic courses.

A source of fear and/or stress is also attributable to the fear of deportation. For students in the United States illegally, they adjust to the culture and lifestyle of the country with the knowledge that they could be forced to leave on any given day. In terms of academics, this attitude discourages investment in school. Students are prone to feel that their studies are useless; even if they continue through school until high school graduation, they have great difficulty in trying to attend college.

According to one interviewee, a larger number of Hispanic kids have been sent to the emergency room for psychiatric evaluation and related symptoms in recent years. The school has not looked into whether these situations are the result of acculturation difficulties or family dynamics, but such incidents indicate that immigrant students deal with greater amounts of stress in their lives or have fewer avenues through which to alleviate these stresses than in years past. Both schools utilize various staff positions specifically designated to helping the social and developmental needs of students, including a psychologist, nurse, guidance counselor, and social workers. Students tend to confide in ESL teachers because of the security of language and extended contact with these teachers, but in the event that students are suffering more severe

emotional difficulties or need more attention than a teacher can provide, the schools employ adequate services otherwise.

High School

Newly arrived immigrant students must deal with a number of challenges in the process of adjustment. In addition to the struggles associated with language acquisition, changes in a student's family structure may affect their attitude and school performance. For most immigrant students, their family was the most important part of their life in their home country. Due to the transition to a new country and culture, these dynamics are skewed and changed. If a student enters the United States without his or her family, or joins parents who immigrated earlier, he or she is faced with the adjustment to parents who did not raise him or her. Due to school and work, it is likely that students will not see their family as much as they expect. The psychological burden often creates a great deal of anxiety to which a student is not accustomed.

Another oft-encountered difficulty that may create stress in a student's life is the frustration of disappointed expectations. For immigrants who come to the United States with hopes of a better life, they must face the reality of an America that does not always live up to its idealized image of opportunity. The hope of achieving financial stability is rarely fulfilled for these students, whose families immigrate to the United States expecting to find greater opportunities than they had in their native country. Undocumented students also live in fear of deportation or other consequences for their illegal presence in the country.

In order to confront these psychological challenges, Jordan employs both an ESL counselor and social workers trained to help students. The school's social workers serve as valuable resources for teachers when they are presented with students who need more support than they are able to provide single-handedly. The staff at Southern High School includes

multiple guidance counselors who can help students dealing with transition problems. However, none of the guidance counselors currently employed at the school is bilingual. For native Spanish speakers, any issues that need to be discussed can be done better in Spanish, but Southern currently doesn't have anyone trained to do so. If a student requires greater support than is readily available at the school, community resources and contacts are easily reachable. Schools will refer students to community organizations such as El Futuro, El Centro Hispano, and the Local Access to Coordinated Healthcare (LATCH) program. Though students don't necessarily take advantage of such resources, they are referred when the school deems it necessary to direct students to greater support.

Indicator 6: Risk of Dropout

Recently arrived immigrants versus established immigrants usually demonstrate very different signs for risk of dropping out before graduation. However, interviewees at both Jordan and Southern expressed that students often put forth extraordinary effort only to realize that they have nearly the same options whether or not they receive a diploma. In line with the tragedy of this realization, an interviewee from Jordan commented that "These kids don't have any dreams and they don't see any hope in their future." Members of the school staff at both schools believe that students who have been in the United States for the majority of their lives are more likely to drop out than are more recent immigrants. These students tend to have greater challenges defining and identifying themselves, as well as a greater likelihood of negative influences from the US culture because they've spent more time in the country. Without well-educated parents and role models who are able to support them and enforce academic excellence, these students often "get lost somewhere along the way".

Established immigrant students are a key group at risk for not completing high school. Gang involvement and high rates of teenage pregnancy plague this population of students. It is common for students to perform well until high school, when they realize the difficulties of their undocumented status and begin to comprehend the limits on their postsecondary pursuits. A member of the school staff at Jordan expressed frustration with students who are citizens or legal residents but behave like students who do not have the ability to attend college:

“It’s frustrating because their parents immigrated to give them more opportunity, but then something happens and the next generation does not take advantage – not fitting in, not knowing what the expectations are for them, or not having many high school graduates or high school attendees in the family to look up to. They aren’t able to plug in to that higher track.”

Illegal immigrant students look at dropping out as a reasonable option because attending college is unlikely. The “hypocrisy of [the situation],” said one member of the school staff at Southern, “is that fake social security numbers are okay to work in the mall but not to go to college.” Some students who come into the school as freshmen without any understanding of English are able to master the language and graduate in four or five years. Though they might want to go into a trade and take classes at Durham Tech, options for post-secondary training and education are almost always too expensive.

For undocumented students who drop out, most end up working in jobs that don’t pay much and provide little security and few benefits. They don’t have the ability to seek out work beyond a certain threshold. Unfortunately, this threshold usually exists whether a student graduated high school or not:

“What do our undocumented students really have to look forward to? Nothing... They have nothing here, no choices. So why even bother? When I see a kid that is really focused on getting higher education and I know they cannot make it here because they don’t have money or they’re not documented, I tell them to go to their home country. I can’t give false hope to these kids.”

Age can also be a major factor for students in the decision to drop out. Immigrant students tend to be older than the average student – one interviewee reported that new immigrants can often enroll as sixteen or seventeen year-old freshmen. These students are more likely to drop out because they quickly become the oldest students in the school. In addition, there is an age limit on athletic participation. If a student is too old to participate in sports, they may be even less inclined to stick with school.

Interviewees at both Jordan and Southern reported that some students enroll in the school without any intention of receiving a diploma. They plan to go to school for one or two years to learn English, then pursue employment without graduating. For students set on leaving school for a job, there is little a teacher can do to convince them otherwise. Although dropping out looks like a negative outcome for these students, the truth of the matter is that dropping out signifies that they learned enough English to have some level of success in the working world.

Durham Public Schools employs a Dropout Prevention Specialist to work with students considered most at risk for leaving school without having graduated. Though Durham Public Schools' Dropout Prevention Specialist is “way overstretched, of course,” it is possible for her to make family contacts that may not be able to develop solely through the school. The dropout prevention specialist reaches out to students in need of extra attention at several high schools in DPS, including Southern and Jordan. The East Durham Children's Initiative has a great opportunity to reach out and support this effort to slow the dropout rate among students at Southern if it so chooses. Jordan also benefits from an ESL Coordinator who is not only employed by the high school, but also by Durham Public Schools. She helps the ESL programs at other schools and serves as an additional resource for Hispanic dropout prevention.

In spite of support specifically focused on dropout prevention, both schools painted a bleak picture for immigrants who begin school in the United States during the high school years. Students grapple with learning English, adjusting to the culture, and going through a difficult transition only to realize that they still have very limited options for postsecondary education or employment. One member of the school staff at Jordan believes that the outcomes for this population of students will not change without policies reforms that address the possible long term trajectories for immigrants: “If things don’t change, I don’t see that the attitudes of our kids are going to change much. If they saw some light at the end of the tunnel, they would be more focused on that.”

A Seventh Indicator: The Role of the Family

In my conceptual framework I did not identify this factor, but interviewees at all five schools addressed the need for parents to actively participate in their children’s education. Several schools provide multiple avenues through which to communicate with parents and engage them in school events, including Latino Parent Nights, bilingual forms and newsletters, and various other measures based on the needs of parents at their respective schools. Across all school levels, school staff recommended that the district take into consideration some sort of English as a Second Language for parents. Since many parents struggle with English just as much as, and usually more than, their children, supporting Spanish-speaking speakers would not only help parents, but their children as well by enabling parents to help students with their schoolwork, provide a connection between students and parents in the learning process, communicate better with schools, and help parents invest in schools. According to one interviewee, the success of many students in the long run hinges on whether their parents are

involved in the school experience: “If done consistently and regularly, and there is a modicum of parent support, interventions are successful and improvement happens.”

Elementary School

E.K. Powe holds Latino Parent Night in order to address any specific needs, concerns, or questions that parents may have regarding their children’s education. Translators are always present at these events; in addition, childcare is provided to encourage attendance without the need for a babysitter. Overall, many of the parents of native Spanish-speakers are consistently involved in their children’s school experience. It was pointed out that parents often struggle more in the adjustment to the United States than do their children, especially at the elementary school level when young students are generally more receptive to change. In addition to school support, parents seek out advice and counsel from El Centro Hispano.

Another resource the school promotes for its Spanish-speaking parents is a Latino parent group. Proposed by a non-Latino parent associated with the school, the group “started so that Latino parents could talk with each other in their own language about concerns about the school, ideas for the school, and things they don’t understand about the school.” The interviewees at E.K. Powe repeatedly affirmed the significance of empowering its parents; parental involvement in the school is considered a key component of its support structure.

Middle School

For parents of children at Lowe’s Grove Middle School who do not speak Spanish, the bilingual guidance counselor communicates regularly with parents through phone calls, conferences, and small group meetings. Sometimes parents are intimidated by the school system, which can deter them from getting involved on behalf of their child if they have questions or concerns that need to be addressed. In order to alleviate this intimidation, the school

offers Latino Parent Nights for native Spanish speaking parents each grading period. These sessions are intended to elucidate the nuances of the school system and relay important information to parents, such as report card explanations, scheduling parent-teacher conferences, and tips for determining whether or not a child is struggling in school. Another goal of the program is to help parents meet similarly-situated parents in the school; parent networks can be powerful means through which to help create a community investment in the school. Correspondence is also sent out in both English and Spanish for parents who may not be literate in English.

In regular interactions with parents, school staff at Neal is able to see that parents need help just as their children do; supporting parents is, in the words of an interviewee, “a big thing.” Students live in a world where their families are the most important part of their life, and oftentimes parents and older siblings are overwhelmed by the obligations of maintaining a stable home life. When parents work two jobs, it is very difficult for them to be involved not only in their child’s academic pursuits, but also in communication with the school. In addition to the time constraints of supporting their family, parents are often unable to help their children with homework because they do not have high levels of academic attainment themselves.

For one interviewee, the most important aspect of the whole problem immigrant students face in education is family involvement. “If the family supports them and demands better work and better results, those students will do better.” The interviewee asserted that students who are failing do not have involved parents; if their families are not concerned about school performance, the student is less likely to be concerned about school performance.

High School

Immigrant students who have lived in the United States face an entirely different set of issues. Their role within the family is often reversed because students adapt to and understand the culture and language better than their parents. As a result, students must do more interpreting and translating information that they wouldn't necessarily need to understand otherwise. They must act more like parents than children in order to help their parents maintain the household and take care of younger siblings.

Jordan offers a Latino Parent Night in order to involve parents as much as possible in school events and programming. One interviewee commented that it is absolutely critical for families to play an active role in the school. Building strong relationships with parents can go a long way in creating a supportive environment in which students learn and succeed. Members of school staff hope that schools and parents working in unison can exert some positive pressure on students to succeed by creating programs that pull parents closer to the school.

SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: INDICATOR CHARTS

Before moving into the analysis, conclusions, and recommendations on data collection from each school, a summary of the indicators is provided in the subsequent chart. Though not comprehensive, this figure differentiates between the key services available and challenges faced at each school as described in previous sections, organized by both indicator and particular school.

	Data Source	E.K. Powe Elem. School	Neal Middle School	Lowe's Grove Middle School
Student Achievement	NC Dept. of Public Instruction; interview reporting	Hispanic/LEP closest to performing at district/state averages; well-established ESL program; community and family approach to engagement	Math Interventionist; tutoring; Encore!	LEP students demonstrate particularly low achievement; tutoring; Citizen Schools
Student-Adult Relationships	Interview reporting	Low teacher turnover; several Spanish speaking staff members in school; high priority on positive relationships	Reliance on ESL teachers; less turnover of ESL teachers; presence of many new classroom teachers; student turnover	Reliance on ESL teachers and bilingual counselor; less turnover of ESL teachers;
Social Network Formation	Interview reporting	Timid students struggle more; tutoring and peer mentoring can help develop confidence in social interactions	Blend into existing group of Hispanics; neighborhood friendships; segregation; gang influences	Blend into existing group of Hispanics; segregation; quicker social adjustment
School Involvement	Interview reporting	Based on personality more than status as an immigrant student	Self-exclusion a major problem; soccer most popular sport; low female involvement; transportation	Soccer and volleyball most popular sports; transportation
Stress and Isolation	Interview reporting	Language adjustment most difficult; support in place for students to mediate stresses	Students withdraw instead of acting out; responsibility of teachers and staff to help; stress at home	Challenges adjusting to particular nuances of culture; overwhelming amount of information to absorb
Risk of Dropout	Interview reporting	N/A	N/A	N/A
The Role of the Family	Interview reporting	Latino Parent Night; parent support group; major emphasis on parent investment in the school		Bilingual counselor for communication; Latino Parent Night

	Data Source	Southern High School	Jordan High School
Student Achievement	NC Dept. of Public Instruction; interview reporting	Several levels of ESL; tutoring; Encore!	Stable, established ESL program with various levels; tutoring; Freshman Academy; community resources
Student-Adult Relationships	Interview reporting	Reliance on ESL teachers due to feelings of isolation; teacher turnover plays larger role than in MS	Reliance on ESL teachers; more Spanish speaking staff available in school
Social Network Formation	Interview reporting	Blend into existing group of Hispanics; segregation; gang affiliations a problem	Blend into existing group of Hispanics; segregation due to class schedule; quicker social adjustment
School Involvement	Interview reporting	Low student initiative; don't feel connected to school; low participation on soccer team due to other obligations; transportation	Relatively low student initiative; low participation on soccer team due to other obligations; transportation
Stress and Isolation	Interview reporting	Guidance counselors and social worker; frustration w/constraints; referrals to community organizations	Different family dynamics; frustration w/constraints; referrals to community organizations
Risk of Dropout	Interview reporting	Gang involvement is a major factor; disconnect between understanding value of education and pursuing it	Easy to get lost in the many obstacles present in students' lives; can't give false hope when postsecondary education unlikely
The Role of the Family	Interview reporting		Bilingual staff for some communication; Latino Parent Night

MOVING FORWARD, MAKING CHANGES

Student Achievement

No matter the age of the students, members of the various school staffs repeatedly emphasized the importance of a student's prior educational experience in both predicting and determining the speed with which transition took place. Students who enter the school system with inconsistent schooling in their home country struggle more in adjusting to the expectations of U.S. schools. This factor plays into the difference between a student's English abilities and their content knowledge. An important distinction between underperforming students was whether a student truly did not possess grade-level appropriate comprehension, or whether they had the appropriate breadth of knowledge but lacked the ability to express that understanding in English. An interviewee from Lowe's Grove addressed this difference:

“That is one of the biggest hurdles we have yet to overcome. It's difficult to see how on grade level they are because of the English. Often it takes several years before we figure out, ‘Yes, it's a problem because they don't speak English,’ or, ‘Yes, it's that they're struggling because they're below grade level.’”

Since students must take the End-of-Grade tests after only one year in the school system, it is possible that they fail because their language skills are not adequately developed. However, one interviewee also noted that even if the tests aren't accurate, it is still easy to tell whether or not a student is performing on grade level: “The tests might not be appropriate, but it's not like the kids are really performing okay and we're just not measuring it.”

In order to minimize the degree to which students fall behind due to problems with language acquisition, several different interviewees suggested that, given the resources, immigrant students might benefit from classes initially taught in Spanish. This would ensure that they develop the content knowledge corresponding to their grade level, rather than risk falling behind due to the language barrier:

“ESL is teaching English, which they definitely need. But, in a fantasy world, when a Hispanic student came and they were not fluent in English or ready to tackle the curriculum in English, they could go to this middle school or high school or wherever they needed to be, and they would be taught in Spanish. Because that would further their education and keep them on grade level. Then, when they got the English, they would be on grade level and have the foundation academically to pick up where they left off.”

The political implications of this recommendation may not be strongly supported due to a negative perception of bilingualism in Durham. However, bilingual schools in Chapel Hill receive a great deal of attention and support. According to one interviewee, “If you go to Chapel Hill, it’s a privilege to be bilingual and people want to go to the bilingual schools and they think it’s a wonderful thing.” If this attitude were to transfer to residents of Durham, the development of more bilingual education programs would be a great component of the district’s programming for both native Spanish speakers as well as native English speakers. The possibility of supplemental programming in Spanish may be something for the East Durham Children’s Initiative to consider; if there is not enough fighting power for in-school Spanish instruction, the organization may be able to reach out to Spanish-speakers through some sort of program offered by the EDCI that focuses on academic proficiency and attainment in Spanish.

The personal investment that ESL teachers take in their students may be one of the greatest resources from which immigrant students benefit. At all school levels, ESL teachers who participated in interviews communicated the importance of not only the academic success of their students, but their personal success as well. Without the support and dedication of ESL teachers to students in great need of attention, it is unlikely that such students would be able to adjust to the school and make the academic gains that they do. Schools that employ bilingual guidance counselors, classroom teachers with Spanish proficiency, and other members of the

school staff with a grasp on Spanish also benefit from a greater breadth of support for immigrant students.

Based on interviewee's responses, the amount of academic resources provided to students decreases as students get older. E.K. Powe staff listed a wide range of supplemental services in which students may participate that specifically relate to academic development. At the high school level, tutoring with either a teacher or a peer were the primary out-of-class opportunities for students to receive additional help. This lack of extra support is problematic considering the fact that achievement gaps grow over time; it is in high school that students will be furthest behind because they have the greatest amount of content to understand. Students who are struggling in the early elementary grades aren't necessarily considered below grade level since all students are learning the same foundations. Students in the early grades are more likely to need extra instruction, but in kindergarten or first grade there is less remedial help and more supplemental material. Since everyone is new to school, there is less uniqueness about the immigrant population. The concept of school is new to every child, and the transition to elementary school presents nuanced challenges to all students. For immigrant students who are new to the United States, the fact that all the children are entering school for the first time is a beneficial factor. They have a very distinct and important characteristic in common with all of their classmates: the unfamiliarity of being a new student.

While early intervention is the most successful, late intervention is better than no intervention at all. Without sufficient supplemental resources at the middle and especially high school levels, older students have fewer means by which to catch up with their peers. According to the Durham Public Schools budget history, \$1,033,425 were eliminated from the budget for the 2009-2010 school year for "Increased student accountability," or remediation tutors, as well

as \$366,273 for literacy coaches (Becoats). The monetary amount eliminated from the budget was the total amount reported for each category, seemingly eliminating all remediation tutors and literacy coaches from Durham Public Schools staff. Though the distribution of these tutors among schools and their effectiveness are not reported, removing school resources for remediation and student achievement does not bode well for student outcomes.

The East Durham Children Initiative intends to create a web of support “from cradle to career” for the students with whom it works. In doing so, early intervention facilitates academic success and positive youth development before a student even begins school. For the young students currently participating in the programs offered by the EDCI, success in school and positive life outcomes are a greater possibility than ever. However, many students at Neal Middle and Southern High are in great need of interventions that their schools may not realistically have the resources to provide. Dropout prevention for high school students is a particularly high-needs position in which the district does not seem able to provide more resources than it does at present. The EDCI has the power to fill these gaps and make a crucial impact in the lives of the slightly older students who are in critical need of support.

In order to more effectively meet the academic needs of immigrant students, particularly at the middle and high school levels, several specific recommendations should be taken into consideration. Many interviewees indicated that grade retention should be more acceptable for students struggling with either the content or the language of a course. Promoting students from grade to grade when they aren't fully prepared propagates the academic difficulties they already face. By more seriously considering retaining a student in order to give them more time with the material, it is possible to minimize the likelihood that achievement gaps grow.

While standard high school graduation is the most desirable outcome for all students, alternative class options such as those offered at the Holton Academy may allow students to complete requirements more easily. Similarly, greater flexibility in a students' course of study could improve grades; it was suggested that students be able to take more specific content courses later in high school rather than jumping straight into difficult courses during their first or second year in the school and in the country. Though such a decision would increase a student's workload in their junior and senior years, spending two years in more basic courses without the same pressures for accountability would prepare them to handle such difficulty.

Summer school in Durham Public Schools does not follow the traditional model. Due to budget cuts, the district offers online summer courses rather than normal classes. While this method is helpful for many students, immigrant students are often less likely to enroll in such a course due to limited internet access or other factors. Decreasing academic gains over the summer also contributes greatly to achievement gaps; without the option for students to attend class and continue to work on academic skills with direction from teachers, students face even greater problems in achieving academic proficiency each school year. The East Durham Children's Initiative promotes summer reading for students at Y.E. Smith through its Durham READS program, but could take into consideration the formulation of a more formal education experience for students over the summer.

While many of these recommendations may improve immigrant students' academic achievement and increase likelihood of graduation, a greater issue overshadows many of these smaller problems. Though members of the school staff invest heavily in the overall wellbeing of immigrant students and pay great attention to students' development, they are more likely to settle for lower academic performance as long as the student is well-adjusted and working hard.

This is not to discredit the work of school staffs in any way. However, interviewees uniformly believe that their schools “do a good job” addressing the needs of students, though they openly acknowledge that students are usually not ready for the next school level or prepared for graduation. Yet test scores and accountability routinely display severe underachievement. The reality of the situation is that all staff works as well as possible within the limits of time, energy, and resources. But these limits are immense. In order for academic attainment to improve, the school district and the individual schools themselves must seek out strategies for evaluation that will not only support the whole-person development of students, but emphasize accountability and whatever support is necessary to reach specific achievement goals. Although comprehensive immigrant transition support cannot be limited to only academic support, programs addressing the other indicators will not fulfill their true purpose unless they ultimately lead to higher academic attainment. Overall, schools know that there is always more to be done, and that there is hope and success for some students, even in the frustrations of many unmet goals:

“We are making progress, slowly. The kids are resilient. And sometimes they come back from high school and they say, “Hey, I made it.” And that’s always a very good feeling when they come back and let us know that even though sometimes we can’t quite see the end of the tunnel here in middle school, that yes, they got out of high school, they made it, and they’re on to something good and positive.”

Student-Adult Relationships

Across all school levels, student-adult relationships greatly impact student achievement and degree of comfort in the school. Reliable adults have the ability to mentor students and provide stability in the process of transition for immigrant students. Teacher turnover plays a much greater role at the elementary school level due to the greater number of years spent in elementary school and the structure of classes with one classroom teacher for all academic

subjects. In both middle and high school, teachers spend much less time with students before they move on to the next subject or the next grade. Fortunately, ESL teachers at all participating schools demonstrate lower percentages of turnover. For immigrant students, this stability is greatly beneficial and instrumental in creating a culture and routine for students as they go through assimilation to the structure and culture of the school. The low turnover for ESL teachers, particularly at the high school level, can be particularly beneficial in keeping students in school and accountable for their actions.

The most important means through which schools can strengthen the value of student-adult relationships, according to interviewees, is to broaden the support that all members of a school staff can provide to Spanish-speaking immigrant students. Teacher training to increase cultural awareness and inform others of the difficulties that immigrant students face would expand the base of support available to these students within the school. Instead of relying solely on ESL teachers and other bilingual staff, students would be able to turn to more people for help who are adequately prepared to support them. One interviewee specifically commented that many teachers at their school want to help Spanish speakers, but are not turned to or trusted. More teachers with training to work with ESL students would likely improve students' feelings of connectedness. A greater number of Spanish speakers in the school would also increase the ability of both students and parents to communicate with staff about important concerns; this could be achieved either through the hiring of more bilingual staff or possibly through Spanish classes for current employees.

However, the DPS budget report also cut \$206,963 from "Staff Development" for the 2009-2010 school year (Becoats). The fact that the district uses staff development as a place to cut spending means that teachers lose the opportunity to develop new skills and techniques for

working with their students. Though the type of staff development removed from DPS resources is not specified, it is significant to note that staff development may be viewed as a category that can be sacrificed for the sake of other priorities. However, the resounding response from members of school staff who were interviewed was that staff development should be utilized for the sake of native Spanish speaking students.

Social Network Formation

Social network formation looks very different at each school level. However, the social atmosphere at each of the middle and high schools involves a great deal of racial or ethnic segregation. Though involvement in activities with a greater variety of students may be the best way to encourage students to branch out, there is little that can be done in schools to specifically address the challenge of social network formation. Social results seem to be more a by-product of solutions to other problems. Schools cannot control what happens when students go home at the end of the day, and their time outside of school has a significant impact on social network formation as well. Interviewees at both Neal Middle School and Southern High School verbalized the influences of gangs as a clear inhibitor to success of students at their schools. This may be another area in which the East Durham Children's Initiative could create positive outlets for youth involvement in order to minimize negative influences and supplement classroom learning with valuable experiences outside of school.

In addition, the adjustment may cause students to struggle with their own self-identity, "whether they're an American, or whether they're Mexican still, or are they a this or are they a that." For this reason, interviewees were not decidedly supportive of pushing students out of their established social structure. Though forging relationships outside of a student's comfort

zone is often beneficial, “I don’t think it’s something we can force on students when they are trying really, really hard to preserve their own identity.”

The discernible differences between recently arrived immigrants and established immigrants also affect the ability of schools to address social challenges. These two groups of students do not share much in common when it comes to social network formation; newly arrived immigrants experience issues with language barriers more than anything else, which established immigrants face the pressures of gang involvement and disconnectedness from schools that are dominated by other racial or ethnic groups. In order to address feelings of disconnectedness, one interviewee suggested, “We need them to step forward a little bit more, and we need the others to embrace them more and accept them more in the school.”

School Involvement

For the most part, members of different school staffs believe that student involvement in classes depends on a student’s personality more than their status as an immigrant or a citizen. Though confidence with the English language may influence students to some degree, class participation was not an aspect of school involvement in which interviewees felt immigrant students were specifically lacking. Across all school levels, interviewees placed much more focus on the students as individuals than as immigrants – which probably benefits the students in developing confidence in the classroom.

However, extracurricular school involvement displays interesting discrepancies between middle and high school. For both school levels, more Spanish-speaking immigrant students express interest in soccer than any other sport. At the middle school level, students regularly go out for the team and dedicate themselves to the sport. Though students continue to express great

interest in and passion for soccer at the high school level, interviewees at both Jordan and Southern said that very few students will try out for the team. It seems that many students are not able to invest as much time in extracurricular activities as they grow older, perhaps as a result of greater out-of-school obligations. However, less involvement can also decrease accountability for positive academic performance. At the middle school level, interviewees at both Neal and Lowe's Grove appreciated the value of athletics as a means through which to enforce high standards for schoolwork. Without this motivation in high school, students may not value their school performance as much since there may not be any incentive for good grades. If schools were able to organize a way for intramural sports to be held on school grounds, students facing obligations that prohibit them from joining an organized team may be able to participate based on their schedules. The East Durham Children's Initiative could look into this particular trend as well, and perhaps consider some form of athletic programming that would not put students in the same situation where work or family obligations keep them from participating.

In order to improve extracurricular involvement, the school district should consider its resources for transportation. Schools used to provide a late bus for students who participated in after-school activities; this resource was lost due to budget cuts. However, the absence of transportations for students whose families do not own cars or whose parents work in the evenings lose the opportunity to receive help from tutors or get involved with clubs and athletics. Since extracurricular involvement generally leads to stronger academic performance, providing transportation that facilitates student participation is a concrete solution through which to promote such activities. Schools that fully support and encourage students to involve themselves in after-school programs may also find that such activities also promote more social interaction among students who may not interact regularly during the school day.

Stress and Isolation

The growth of community resources for Hispanics in Durham is instrumental to addressing any and all needs of the population. The fact that so many of the interviewees were well-informed about which organizations could be utilized by immigrants indicates that they have likely interacted with the organizations in the past and feel comfortable referring students. Schools rely on the community more than expected to address negative psychological effects of transition and adjustment because the wide variety of accessible organizations allows schools to reach out to a greater number of professionals for high quality assistance.

In order to ensure that these resources are taken advantage of, a key recommendation for school staff is to follow-through with referrals. If teachers feel that students and/or their families would greatly benefit from the aid a certain organization offers, confirming contact between the family and the organization would be the surest way to verify that help is sought and received. Community organizations exist to be utilized by those who need them; where schools may not be able to address every need of their students, they can direct students and families elsewhere to guarantee that those needs are met. Within the school, bilingual counselors have the ability not only to work with students on problems with stress and anxiety, but communicate with parents as well. At both Lowe's Grove Middle School and Jordan High School, the clear presence of bilingual staff and counselors effectively reach out to immigrant students and their families in need of non-academic aid.

The East Durham Children's Initiative can look to the example of stress and isolation for ways to work with the school to provide resources for students. It was expected that most issues for stress and anxiety would be addressed by the staff members in the school. However, the proliferation of community organizations equipped to aid Hispanics in Durham has led to a

greater reliance on such assistance by schools. Similarly, the EDCI should look for ways it can utilize its resource to support schools through means that increase the efficiency and effectiveness of what the school already has to offer. Very few interviewees referenced the East Durham Children's Initiative; several professed not to know anything about what the organization does or how it works in conjunction with the school. To make the East Durham Children's Initiative a beneficial component of support for the students at Y.E. Smith Elementary, Neal Middle, and Southern High, its services must be well known by the staff at the schools. Fostering a stronger relationship between the EDCI and each of the three schools both increases the impact the EDCI can have on students and improves the likelihood of high participation based on in-school referrals to specific programs.

Risk of Dropout

Though Durham Public School's employment of a Dropout Prevention Specialist certainly demonstrates the district's intentions to address issues of dropout, many more students need dropout prevention services than can be reached by just one person. In order to reach more students, the district may need to consider alternative and supplemental options that may have an impact. One member of the school staff at Jordan asserted that "dropout prevention in high school is a band-aid." However, that does not mean that it should not be utilized; it simply means that other strategies employed when students are younger are more effective in addressing the problems that lead students to drop out. In fact, forgoing any sort of dropout prevention perpetuates issues with low student achievement and allows the trend to continue. Dropout prevention and interventions should begin as early as fourth grade through mentoring and family support. By high school, students already "have a foot out the door." Most problems related to

the likelihood of dropout begin before a student gets to high school. If the East Durham Children's Initiative were able to create a dropout prevention system that focused on eliminating these risks early but making the effort to follow through with older students when necessary, its web of support would have a strong base not only for young students, but for older students who have a limited amount of time to change their academic trajectories.

Newly arrived immigrant students are able to have a strong identity as an immigrant who came to the United States to work hard and take advantage of opportunities they were not afforded in their home country. Immigrant student who have lived in the United States for longer periods of time don't necessarily feel like immigrants, but they also feel separate from the mainstream American culture. This disconnectedness increases student's susceptibility to the pressures of gang involvement and teenage pregnancy, both of which increase the likelihood of dropping out. Jordan High School's attempt to mediate this pressure for female students through a pregnancy prevention group as well as a pregnancy support group may provide a useful outlet for students to express the difficulties they experience while keeping them connected to and supported by the school. Recently arrived immigrant students rarely face such pressures, and often motivate themselves more readily than do established immigrants. However, the most significant factor in a students' likelihood of dropping out – undocumented immigrants especially – may well be their extremely limited options for postsecondary education. When a student realizes that their options for work or school upon high school graduation do not change whether or not they receive a diploma, the incentives for completing high school diminish. In the words of an interviewee at Jordan, "The situation isn't going to change until something gives for college." Interviewees at both Southern and Jordan said that the reality of limited futures really affects their students, and that they don't feel they can "give false hope to these kids"

about what awaits them in coming years. Even documented immigrants whose families do not have substantial financial means must overcome significant hurdles to attend college. Until postsecondary schooling becomes a more viable option, the long run values of education for these students are often not outweighed by their family's need for another wage earner. If they are able to work the same job whether or not they graduate, it makes more sense in terms of finances for a student to drop out and begin work earlier. Interviewees at both Southern and Jordan expressed frustration with the situation for their students. One commented, in reference to the financial limitations with which many documented and especially undocumented immigrants struggle, "Somebody should have money somewhere for this kid." The most likely means by which to address this outcome is through bigger picture policy reforms regarding immigration policy and the rights of immigrants residing in the United States.

The Role of the Family

Family influence on a student's academic success was broached in nearly every interview conducted, though it was not included as a specific topic or concern. However, when members of the various school staffs thought of the support their students need, they uniformly fell back on the family as a major source of encouragement. The nature of parental involvement – considered imperative for the success of many students – looks different at different school levels. In elementary school, parents often provide their children with a great deal of academic help by assisting their children with school projects or homework and supplementing learning materials from school with other stimulating activities. E.K. Powe Elementary School's web of support invites and welcomes parents to take part, both during and outside of the normal school day. The close relationship E.K. Powe prioritizes with its families creates a warm atmosphere in

which parents feel comfortable. By creating an atmosphere conducive to family engagement, E.K. Powe promotes the power of the family to influence positive academic outcomes for developing youth. In order for Y.E. Smith to do the same, its programming must solicit the participation of parents. If a parent feels personally invested in the school, that investment will be relayed to his or her child. By creating and implementing programs that support students while engaging parents in the school's mission and goals, the system for student learning is able to activate an additional source of support. At the elementary school level, facilitating student development through academic enrichment seems to take precedence.

As students enter middle and especially high school, the emphasis on supplemental academic support dwindles. For the most part, parents stay involved in the school in order to be informed and prepared to keep their children on track. Just as a greater number of extracurricular and social opportunities are presented to students, the means through which parents invest in the school shift away from academics. Parents serve as a major motivating force to keep children in school as they get older. Without parents or other family members to hold students accountable for their work outside of the classroom, teachers and schools have only a limited sphere of influence during the school day. Students who come home to parents who expect high performance and academic success have a much greater incentive to meet those goals than do students whose families do not hold high expectations for achievement. As EDCI programs more fully integrate into schools and the community, the EDCI should strive to seek participation from as many parents and adults as possible in order to strengthen this foundation of support for students. Since both Neal Middle School and Southern High School acknowledge the value of parents in a student's educational experience but do not seem to offer many

programs that specifically involve parents, the EDCI may be able to support this need through its services to the schools.

Both Jordan and Southern cannot only recognize the power of the family, but must take action on this knowledge. Latino Parent Nights and similar opportunities to inform parents are a surefire way to hold all students accountable for their learning, but additional means by which to involve parents in the schools must be considered. Though the language barrier creates an obvious challenge for native Spanish-speaking parents, interviewees also suggested ESL classes for parents. This could be a fantastic program for the East Durham Children's Initiative to implement since many of its programs already seek out parental participation. Such a program would not only bring parents to the school, but give them skills that they can use within the context of the school and outside of it. Educating parents in order to educate children may be one of the surest ways to guarantee that these students have the opportunity for success and receive as much support as possible along the way.

Looking at Implications

Most research regarding Spanish-speaking immigrant students considers a homogenous group of students, allowing conclusions to recommend a specific and focused plan of action for resolving the difficulties presented. However, in conducting interviews and learning more about immigrant students in Durham Public Schools, the more it becomes obvious that a very heterogeneous population of Spanish-speakers and immigrants are enrolled in the school system. Each school's population of immigrant students looks different and demonstrates different needs; there are few blanket reforms that would effectively reach out to all of them. Rather than look at immigrant students as a discrete, definable group with distinct needs, policy decisions should

consider the wide range of students whose specific life circumstances affect their school experience. Though broad policy recommendations may be applicable for Spanish-speaking immigrant students, schools must have some flexibility in determining how to adapt such policies to their student body. In order for Y.E. Smith, Neal, and Southern to use resources most effectively, permitting some degree of freedom to evaluate the needs of students on a school-to-school basis and structure reforms based on those needs will improve the effectiveness of allocated resources.

Where schools may be limited by the policies they are able to implement, the EDCI has the unique opportunity to introduce a variety of programs based on the needs it finds most compelling. The organization has the freedom to choose its programs in concordance with very specific school needs; by communicating with its schools about the needs they are not able to fulfill as effectively as they'd like, the EDCI may be able to supplement them to help students who face particular obstacles in their school experience.

In terms of transferring programs from one school to another, more conversation between and among schools may lead to greater innovation. Responding to whether Jordan High School is able to address the needs of its Spanish-speaking immigrant students, an interviewee replied, "Jordan is doing the best it can. But the need far outweighs the available resources. But that's not just at Jordan, it's at every school." Schools acknowledge that they are not the only ones who would benefit from more funding for programming or visual aids in the classroom or additional ESL teachers. However, the more that staffs are able to interact with one another about the strengths and limitations of their schools, the more discussion there will be regarding the bigger ideas and policies in place. This already takes place to some extent, especially with communication between fifth grade and sixth grade teachers about students entering middle

school. An interviewee at E.K. Powe commented that teachers want to “let teachers know personal information so she has a feeling for what this kid needs, not just academically.” With middle school teachers and staff better prepared to meet their students where they stand, these students experience an easier transition to middle school. By promoting and facilitating greater conversation, teachers and school staff may be able to look at their own programs with more perspective, share their ideas with others, and incorporate the positive aspects of teaching experiences in their own classrooms.

While immigrant transition programs must account for the numerous components of school adjustment for students, academics cannot be sacrificed in lieu of a child’s well-rounded development. These interventions and strategies must support the process of student transition in an effort to achieve high academic performance. In determining how schools will distribute their resources and support to students, one interviewee commented that, “[There] are so many groups that are considered at-risk and so many directions we are trying to turn our education preparation to meet everyone’s needs.” However, every school that participated in interviews and research enrolls LEP students whose End of Grade passing rates fall below both district and state averages. Though the provision of resources to support the complete adjustment of immigrant students to the school system is admirable and necessary – and such success should not be diminished – where do these students stand if they do not achieve academic proficiency as well? As a participant in the effort to eliminate adverse academic outcomes for students in Durham, the East Durham Children’s Initiative must strive to work towards supporting transition for immigrant students in order to assure their academic success. By expanding the breadth of factors that are addressed, academic priorities seem to be compromised. Although the academic component of immigrant transition is only one element in a dynamic system, its success is

integral and vital for the impacts of any other component to truly help students improve their life outcomes.

QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Reflecting on the methodology for this research, it might be valuable to take school performance into account when determining schools for comparison. Though similar demographic compositions did result in similar distribution and availability of school resources, it also led to fewer distinctions between the schools than would have been ideal for comparison. Additionally, schools with high LEP performance on standardized testing would be able to share the strategies they employ that have a powerful impact on helping these students adjust to the academic rigor and expectations of their schools. These techniques may be able to help the participating schools from this study narrow in on low achievement and implement new ideas to minimize it.

Aggregate data released by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction only includes district and state averages across all school levels, rather than the passing averages at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Analysis of academic performance, therefore, was limited by this general data. In order to determine more specifically where schools lack in comparison to other schools, more specific data about each school level would be extremely beneficial.

To expand research in the future, interviews with parents and students could provide insight not only into the resources schools offer, but how the school is perceived by those who make use of those resources. Delving further into each of the specific indicators and the degree to which they contribute to student adjustment would help schools make more informed

decisions about which recommendations stand to make the greatest impact on increasing student performance. The distinctions between different types of immigrant students (recently arrived versus established) would be useful to develop a clearer picture of how these indicators affect different populations of students.

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